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SPIRITUAL READINGS FOR THE LITURGICAL YEAR

VOL. I. ADVENT TO EASTER.

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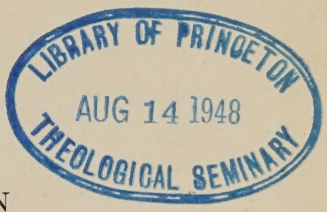
Spiritual Readings for the Liturgical Year

IN TWO VOLUMES



BY

R. E. HUTTON

CHAPLAIN OF ST. MARGARET'S, EAST GRINSTEAD

With a Preface

BY THE

REV. ALFRED G. MORTIMER, D.D.

RECTOR OF ST. MARK'S, PHILADELPHIA

VOL. I.

Advent to Easter

RIVINGTONS

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1900

"It has been well said that the Liturgical Year is like a golden crown, studded with crystals and precious stones, that the Church has substituted for the crown of thorns."

TO

THE MOTHER SUPERIOR

AND SISTERS

OF

ST. MARGARET'S COMMUNITY

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[1] Readings XXVII.–XXXIII. form a series suitable for "The Three Hours" on Good Friday.

PREFACE

I CANNOT believe that these volumes need any commendation or introduction from me; but, as their author thinks otherwise, I very willingly acquiesce in his kind request that I should add a few words by way of Preface.

Spiritual reading must be a distinct part of the daily rule of all who are sincerely striving to live an earnest Christian life; and spiritual books may be roughly classified under two heads:—

I. As they treat of the experiences of the soul according to the principles of Ascetic Theology.

II. As they teach us to draw from the wells of salvation—the words of Holy Writ—those spiritual draughts, which not only refresh us when weary, but are able to make us wise unto salvation.

Books of the first class are very needful in the beginning of spiritual life, but their usefulness is necessarily limited, and, if such books be read too exclusively, or in too great number, they are liable rather to confuse than to help the ordinary reader.

This, however, is not the case with regard to works of the second class; for Revelation is indeed an inexhaustible fountain of truth, from which we may draw, all our lives, without fear either of being surfeited by the quantity, or of exhausting the supply.

It is those whose knowledge of Holy Scripture is most intimate, who bear witness that the deeper they delve into its treasures, the richer and more abundant they prove to be.

Hence a well-arranged book of spiritual readings, based upon Holy Scripture, is always a boon to a large class of Christians. And in arranging such a work, as the Author points out in his Introduction, no method can be better than that which follows the mysteries of our faith, as they are brought before us in the seasons of the Christian year.

It is true, indeed, that the truths on which we are called to meditate by the Feasts and Fasts of the Church, are each year the same; yet this is the very reason why books of this kind are needed, that we may contemplate these truths from a somewhat different point of view, that we may see them as the Holy Spirit has brought them home to another mind, and thus often discover in them, not only new beauties, but also new lessons.

Among those things which have seemed to me most

excellent in that part of this volume which I have been privileged to read, I would note the following:—

I. The threefold division of the subject for each week, as it is found in Holy Scripture: (1) in Prophecy; (2) in the words of our Blessed Lord Himself; and (3) in the response of the soul.

These divisions are not only arranged carefully, so as to bring into relation with one another different parts and aspects of the Word of God, but they are useful as examples of a devotional treatment of Holy Scripture, which may be applied to other subjects.

II. Then the short passages for reading during the week, all bearing more or less on the subject of the Sunday reading, not only help to carry on the thought there treated, but suggest a valuable method of Bible study.

For instance, the subject for the third Sunday in Advent, "The Messenger of God," brings before us the character and work of St. John the Baptist, while the first four passages for reading during the week (page 68) show us how his character and work, in their most important features, were foreshadowed in his great Old Testament type, Elijah.

III. Again, the quotations from mediæval writers are often most happy and interesting, attracting us

like flowers culled from a very beautiful garden; and, indeed, there are few richer stores of Biblical study than the writings of holy men of those ages.

To use this book profitably it will not be enough to read the text and admire the beauty of thought here and there. We must ponder on what we read, and let the book send us, as it is intended, to search more deeply the treasures of the Book of books.

ALFRED G. MORTIMER.

St. Mark's, Philadelphia.
St. Andrew's Day, 1899.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THESE "Spiritual Readings" follow the course of the Liturgical Year. They aim at keeping the idea of the Church in her sacred seasons constantly before the reader, and in some degree fostering a love for the inspired pages of the Holy Scriptures.

The six short "passages for reading" that follow each of the longer Readings are intended to carry on throughout the week the main thought that has been suggested. These "passages for reading" are purposely brief, and oblige the reader to refer to the sacred text. The great importance of private devotional reading of God's Word can hardly be too much insisted upon; nothing can take its place.

The best course of Scripture reading is, without doubt, that sketched for us by the Church in her series of lessons at Matins and Evensong. The ideal that she seems to propose to us is that these should be read daily by the laity as well as by the clergy, and if this could be done there would be little left

to desire, but experience teaches that this is more than most people find time for. The danger is lest the sacred volume should drop out of daily use altogether. If these Spiritual Readings in any degree help to foster the practice of the daily study of a short portion of the Word of God, they will have been successful in one of the objects for which they were written.

A few words may be needful as to the mystical interpretation of Holy Writ. We have our Lord's own authority for this use of the Old Testament. He Himself chose the story of the lifting up of the serpent in the wilderness as a type of His Crucifixion; He quoted also the story of Jonah as a figure of His Resurrection. On the day of His Resurrection, during the walk with the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, our Lord expounded all the things concerning Himself that lay hidden under the types and the prophecies of the Old Testament: "Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself."

St. Paul speaks of the creation of the light as a figure of the illumination of the soul by faith: "God, Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness," he says, "hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Again, St. Paul refers to the story

of Hagar, and finds in it a mystical meaning (Gal. iv. 24).

There can be no doubt that the Old Testament is far more than a record of facts, types, and prophecies. It is a deep mine, full of spiritual teaching.

The great Fathers of the Church have made very frequent use of this mystical sense of Holy Writ. In our own "Book of Common Prayer," there are several instances of the application of the types of the Old Law to the anti-types of the New Covenant. For example, in the Baptismal Service the Ark and the passage of Israel through the Red Sea, are referred to as typical of the Sacrament of Regeneration.

In our hymns we are also familiar with this typical use of God's Word.

I have felt, therefore, quite justified in applying a mystical sense to many passages of the Old Testament, and especially to the "days" of Creation in the Readings on the Seven Words from the Cross.

My thanks are due to Dr. Mortimer for his kindness in writing a Preface for my book. As the author of *Helps to Meditation*, and more recently of *Catholic Faith and Practice*, Dr. Mortimer is known, and his words valued, throughout the Anglican Communion. I must, however, not allow it to be supposed that Dr. Mortimer pledges himself to the accuracy of my book. I hope

that I have not written anything contrary to sound Catholic Theology, but for whatever imperfections there may be in these pages I am, of course, alone responsible.

The Reading for the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin is from a sermon by the non-juror Bishop, Dr. Hickes, who flourished in the seventeenth century. I have reproduced it here, as the sermon from which it is taken is but little known, and not easily obtainable. It has an incidental value as a proof that the greater post-Reformation Anglican Bishops were able to combine the rugged simplicity of the language of Holy Scripture and the Primitive Fathers, as to the Blessed Virgin, with much of the phraseology of the later Church.

R. E. H.

EAST GRINSTEAD.
Feast of the Conception B.V.M., 1899.

I.

INTRODUCTION

The Liturgical Year

THE CROWN OF CHRIST

I.

The Liturgical Year

CHRISTIANITY is the knowledge of Jesus Christ. This knowledge is not of the intellect only, for that may lead to mere interest in the character and work of Christ, such as the study of the biography of any great man may produce. The knowledge required of a Christian is the knowledge of faith, springing from the heart as well as from the intellect, the knowledge that "buildeth up" (*οἰκοδομεῖ*),[1] because it is inspired by love of Him Who is known not only intellectually, but affectively. It is a kind of personal trust in Christ, like that spoken of by St. Paul when he said, "I know Whom I have believed," or "Whom I have trusted."[2] This belief of the Apostle was inseparable from love and self-surrender, because real faith in Jesus Christ involves the acceptance of His claim to be the Son of God, and the consequent obedience to the will and word of God revealed by Jesus Christ.

[1] 1 Cor. viii. 1. [2] 2 Tim. i. 12.

Therefore St. Paul goes on to say, "I am persuaded that He is able to guard that which I have committed unto Him against that day."

A knowledge of Jesus Christ that did not involve a loving self-surrender would profit little or nothing. It is to help us towards the knowledge, love, and service of Jesus Christ that the Church observes the Liturgical Year. We have to become the friends of Jesus Christ, to enter into His mind, His heart; to listen to His words, watch His actions—nay, more, we have to try and so familiarise ourselves with His way of looking at things, that by degrees we ourselves may instinctively think, act, and speak as we may believe He Himself would have thought, acted, and spoken had He been placed in our circumstances. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus," is the apostolic command to the Philippian converts. The reason for this close imitation of Jesus Christ is not hard to understand when we remember that man was created in the image and likeness of God, that this image was marred in the Fall, that Jesus Christ is the "image of the invisible God,"[1] and that consequently by likeness to the Incarnate Word we are enabled to regain the Divine image. "God, Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."[2] God is with us—our "Immanuel"[3]—in Jesus Christ. We were created to know, love, and serve God,

[1] Col. i. 15. [2] 2 Cor. iv. 6. [3] Isa. vii. 14.

and we are enabled to do this by knowing, loving, and serving our Lord, Who is God "manifest in the flesh."[1]

In the observance of the Liturgical Year the Church calls us to the side of her Lord. She dramatises His earthly life, and summons her children to re-live it continually. Before our Lord ascended into heaven He gave a command to His Apostles, who represented the hierarchy of His Church: "Go ye," He said, "into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature."[2] "Go," that is to say, "make known My life, words, and work, all that I have said and done on earth; go, make disciples of all nations."

It was not enough that His Apostles should preach this or that doctrine, or administer divinely ordained sacraments; they must make known Jesus Christ Himself, for "this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent."[3]

Every event in our Lord's incarnate life is a part of the Gospel, and therefore obedience to His command, "Preach the Gospel," involves the presentation of His whole life and work to the world. It would have been possible to do this by mere oral teaching, but it would have been a less effectual way of proclaiming the Gospel than that which the Church has been divinely guided to follow. She teaches us not only to hear, but, as it were, to *see* our Lord in His life on earth. We must be with Him at Bethlehem, in the wilderness, in

[1] 1 Tim. iii. 16. [2] St. Mark xvi. 15. [3] St. John xvii. 3.

Gethsemane, and on Calvary. We must meet Him from time to time in the great Forty Days; we must witness His Ascension, and await the coming of the Spirit of Truth with the little band of the faithful in the upper chamber at Jerusalem. The spirit of each event that the Church commemorates in her yearly round of Fasts and Feasts must be brought into our own actual experience. In order that this may be accomplished we have to realise that the Church is the mystical Body of Christ, and that she not only speaks in the name of her Lord, but continues His presence on earth—no longer indeed "after the flesh,"[1] but not the less really, since it is in and by His Church that our Lord fulfils the promise, "I will not leave you comfortless (orphans): I will come to you."[2] It is this fact that makes the observance of the Liturgical Year no bare commemoration of past events, but in a certain sense a continual renewal of the earthly life of the Incarnate Word.

The Church is able by the grace of the Divine Spirit to breathe into the Festivals the breath of life, so that her children may receive at each Feast or Fast the gift or grace peculiar to the mystery commemorated. All the graces that cluster around the Birth of Christ, and all the spiritual help that belongs to His Nativity are, for instance, placed in a special way within our reach during Christmastide. To bestow these special and appropriate graces is *then*, more than during the rest

[1] 2 Cor. v. 16. [2] St. John xiv. 18.

of the year, the purpose of the Holy Ghost. The special truths that belong to each mystery of the Christian Year are, we believe, rendered especially luminous in the light that comes from the keeping of the seasons of the Church.

It is this fact that makes it so important to approach these yearly commemorations in a sympathetic spirit. We can hardly keep them with profit unless we throw ourselves into the spirit of the Church, and for the time put aside all that belongs not only to the worldly spirit, but even to the Church at some other time. Not, of course, that we can for a moment forget the "finished work" of our Lord, or rather, that His work in one sense is a finished work. We cannot and ought not to keep Christmas, for instance, as though Calvary had not yet been disclosed to us. There will be suggestions of the coming Cross even in the brightness that encircles the manger bed; but what is needful is to let the special spirit of the Feast pervade every other mystery that may come into our mind at the time. The Cross is never absent from the mind of the Church, but the light that hovers round it catches its tint from the mystery which is, just at the time, being brought before us. The light around the Cross is manifold, many-hued as the "rainbow round about the throne"; it is glad at one time, and sombre at another.

To attain this sympathy with the spirit of the Church must be our prayer, and our efforts must second our petitions by our use of the means that may be within

our reach to foster and develop the Liturgical spirit, to feel with the Church, and, as far as possible, throw ourselves into the spirit of the Church in her observance of the round of Feasts and Fasts—each recalling an event in the Master's life, or illuminating some mystery of the faith,—which go to make up the Liturgical Year.

Think for a moment what the Liturgical Year means.[1] It opens with Advent, in offices full of a strange mingling of expectation, regret, hope, and fear; the solemn anticipations of coming judgment blend with the joyful anticipation of the near approach of a Saviour; the deep notes of the *Dies Iræ*[2] passing into the jubilant invitation of *Veni, veni, Emmanuel.*[3] The sound of His coming seems to become almost audible—a sound sometimes in the far-off distance, sometimes near, as of the wheels of His chariot over the hills where the twilight hovers: an echo of the words, "Behold, I come quickly!"

Christmas follows, bringing with it the peaceful, silent adorations of Mary and Joseph and of the shepherds; the joyful hymns of the angels and the carols of the little children, who down the centuries gather around the crib of Bethlehem.

Then comes Epiphany with its journey of the strange

[1] The following description of the Liturgical Year is from my book, *The Sorrows of the King.*

[2] "Day of wrath, O day of mourning."

[3] "O come, O come, Emmanuel."

and dusky kings from out the darkness into the radiance of that new Light which has so lately risen to "lighten the Gentiles." The brightness of the Epiphany is followed by the sombre violet and the hushed organs of Lent, when the Church is, with her Saviour, "led up of the Spirit into the wilderness" to fast, and watch, and to pray with Him during those forty days; Lent, with its chanted *Miserere*, striving to bring home to fallen man a sense of sin, and seeming to fail, until in the gloom of its closing days the Church, in order to force her children to dwell upon every detail of the Passion, veils the crucifix[1] and the figures of Mary and the saints—hides them all, as if even they might distract us for a moment from the awful tragedy of the last hours of her dying Master. But hardly has the strange majesty of the Passion Sunday *Vexilla Regis*,[2] died away, than on Palm Sunday there is, for a moment, a pause in the sadness, and Holy Week opens with the last glimmer of triumph that the fickle people offered to their rejected Messiah. The palms wave as the procession goes its way; but we have hardly finished our *Gloria, laus, et honor*[3] before we are startled with the wild cry for

[1] The veiling of the crucifix and other objects with purple before Passion Sunday is symbolical of our Lord's hiding of Himself mentioned in the Gospel for that Sunday; and also may suggest that we are not to anticipate the events of Holy Week, but step by step to follow our Lord. On Good Friday, therefore, the crucifix is fitly unveiled.

[2] "The Royal Banners forward go."

[3] "All glory, laud, and honour."

blood that breaks in upon the solemn chanting of the Passion. The end draws near, and the long, wailing strains of Tenebræ are like the threatening gusts of wind that surge and die down before the storm breaks. For an instant, on Maundy Thursday, something of the old splendour returns to the Liturgy, but without its full exultation. It is the irrepressible joy of the Church, even amid all her grief, in the possession of that great and unspeakable Gift around which all her love and worship centre. But the lights are hardly out on the altar than she falls back into the gloom from which, for a moment, the institution of the Eucharist had called her. The sanctuary is bare; the lamp is extinguished; the Presence gone from the altar, and the Church falls down stricken and amazed before the naked crucifix in all the desolation of Good Friday.

Another pause, and then what a change! It draws towards the dawn of Easter. The Paschal moon burns in the heavens above the fragrant garden and the new tomb. The first notes of the birds flutter upon the soft stirring airs of the morning, and lo! the angels are there, and the tomb is empty. Heaven and earth catch the joyful news, "The Lord is risen," and from the ransomed Church goes up one burst of praise—*Alleluia! Alleluia! Surrexit Dominus vere,*[1] *Alleluia!*

The great Forty Days go their way, with glimpses of the Risen Lord, until at the Ascension He is parted

[1] "The Lord is risen indeed."

from our sight. The Fire that He came to cast upon earth falls in flaming tongues at Pentecost, and the Church goes forth to her work endued with a mighty Power from on high.

In the adorations of the Feast of the Most Holy Trinity the Church sums up her faith in the Triune Majesty of God, and then on the Thursday following calls forth, as it were, from out of the very bosom of that impenetrable mystery, the abiding Presence of the Incarnate God in the Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist. On this Feast of Corpus Christi, Eternal Truth fulfils the parting promise, "I will not leave you orphans: I will come to you." "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

Then come the long weeks after Trinity, when the saints pass one by one across the pathway, and take their places among the great multitude of the redeemed, who stand before the Throne of God in the Church Triumphant. They are "clothed with white robes," lifting up holy hands to succour and defend the Church on earth.

And so the months glide away into the past; year follows year; each one as it runs its course repeating to the children of the Church the same gracious story of the Master, "till He come."

It has been well said that this Liturgical Year is like a golden crown, studded with crystals and precious stones, that the Church has substituted for the crown of thorns with which the Jewish Church surrounded the head of

the Saviour, "*data est ei corona, et exivit vincens ut vinceret*"—"a crown was given unto Him; and He went forth conquering and to conquer."[1]

In the Liturgical Year the Church seems to stamp upon the fleeting course of time, as it rolls on into eternity, the very impress of the life of her Lord.

She offers this work to Him in reparation for the three-and-thirty years on earth, when men rejected Him and put Him to death. And He, the glorified Christ, accepts the gift of His Church. He puts forth His hand, still scarred, to take the crown she offers. And as He takes it, the dew of His blessing falls from His Throne above, and blesses the year thus consecrated to His service. "Thou crownest the year with Thy goodness."[2] Thou encirclest with Thine own life the fleeting years that make the lives of men.

The Liturgical Year is, then, the school in which God teaches His children. He places before them Jesus Christ, Who is "the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His Person,"[3] in order that He may be the pattern and example after which His children may learn to fashion their own life. This is the "purpose of God in Christ Jesus." "Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the First-born among many brethren."[4]

It might be thought that in the continual repetition

[1] Rev. vi. 2.
[2] Ps. lxv. 12.
[3] Heb. i. 3.
[4] Rom. viii. 29.

year after year of the mysteries of our Lord's life there would be some loss of freshness, some sense of weariness. It is, however, the experience of all who follow the Liturgical Year with anything like earnestness, that the recurrence of the Festivals does not in the least diminish their charm. On the contrary, the longer we live the more inexhaustible the Gospel mysteries seem to become; the more fragrant, and the more full of grace. This is the work of God the Holy Ghost, Who desires that our life should go from strength to strength by the continual finding of new light and fresh vigour in the contemplation and following of the life of Christ. We find year by year as a Festival comes round that it brings a twofold grace—the increase of the knowledge of the truths of the faith once delivered to the saints, and an increase also of our own spiritual growth.

The cycle of the Liturgical Year presents to our mind and heart every doctrine of the Church in its suitable place and order. We are thus enabled literally to build up ourselves in our most holy faith.

There is another result—most precious—from the keeping of the seasons of the Church, and that is, growth in the knowledge and value of the written Word of God, the Holy Scriptures.

We cannot go through the Liturgical Year without finding ourselves daily in contact with these Divine Scriptures. The Offices of the Church are almost entirely constructed from the material supplied in the Old and New Testaments.

The Psalter is the foundation upon which the Church has built up her Choir Office—her Matins, her Evensong, and the Lesser Hours. All the wealth of the Prophets, all the treasury of the Apostolic Epistles has been lavished upon this great work of the Canonical Hours.

But it is at the Altar of the Eucharist that the actual text of the Holy Gospels is proclaimed with every mark of worship and of love. There the hallowed pages live again, and shine more brightly than the lights which tell of the speedy advent of the Light of the World.

There, in the Eucharistic Presence of the Incarnate Word, the Altar Office draws up into itself the worship of the Choir services, and floods them with light and fills them with grace. The Altar is the shore of the eternal world ; Jesus Christ stands on that shore when the morning breaks—stands there (as of old by the Lake of Tiberias) to illuminate the reason, strengthen the will, draw out the love, and deepen the worship of His Church in the moment when He forces upon her the conviction of His Presence, and constrains her to cry out, "It is the Lord!"[1]

It is for this reason that the Choir Office is always linked at least by the Collect to the Office of the Altar.

In entering, therefore, into the spirit of the Church and of the Liturgical Year, we shall necessarily grow in our knowledge of the Holy Scriptures. In the

[1] St. John xxi. 7.

inspired writings of the Old Testament we have the record of the immediate preparation of the world for the first Advent of Jesus Christ. In the Holy Gospels we have the record of the Saviour's life and death, of His rising again, and of His wonderful Ascension. In the Acts of the Apostles we have the first pages of the history of the Catholic Church, the story of the giving of the Holy Ghost for His temporal mission, and the acts of the first Martyrs, Apostles, and Confessors of Christ. In the Epistles we have letters inspired by God to aid not only the first converts of the Jewish and Gentile worlds, but to instruct for all time the faithful who are called of God into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ.

The Liturgical Year is thus the means ordained by God, through the instrumentality of His Church, to make known Jesus Christ, who in His turn makes known the Father and all His infinite love for His children.

And yet have we not each of us much to learn? Are we not, perhaps, still like St. Philip, saying, "Shew us the Father," forgetful that the Father can only be known through the Son, Who is His visible "express image"? "Philip saith unto Him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father!"[1]

[1] St. John xiv. 8, 9.

Liturgical Notes for Advent

The Western Church (Roman and Anglican) reads the greater part of the book of *Isaiah* during Advent.

The Anglican lectionary provides for the reading of part of the *Revelation of St. John* during Advent and Christmastide.

Office Hymns.

Matins. *Verbum supernum prodiens.*

"O Heavenly Word, Eternal Light."—*A. and M.*, 46.

Lauds. *Vox clara ecce intonat.*

"Hark! a thrilling voice is sounding."—*A. and M.*, 47.

Vespers. *Conditor alme siderum.*

"Creator of the starry height."—*A. and M.*, 45.

The hymn *Dies iræ*, "Day of wrath! O Day of mourning!" (*A. and M.*, 398), and "The Litany of the Four Last Things" (*A. and M.*, 463) are also very generally used at this time.

II.

FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

The Advent Spirit

Prophecy

"Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will enquire, enquire ye: return, come." (Isa. xxi. 11, 12.)

Jesus Christ

"Blessed is he that watcheth." (Rev. xvi. 15.)

The Soul

"My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning." (Ps. cxxx. 6.)

II.

The Advent Spirit

"I am watching quietly
Every day:
Whenever the sun shines brightly
I rise and say—
Sunlight is the shining of His face!
And look unto the gates of His high place
Beyond the sea,
For I know He is coming shortly
To summon me."

THERE are probably but few persons who have not at one time or another watched the day break. Perhaps we ourselves have looked out over the sea when "darkness was upon the face of the deep." We have heard the dull splash of the waves as they ebb and flow in their ceaseless motion, but we have not seen anything, for the darkness which is darkest before the dawn has hidden everything from our sight. Gradually, almost without our being aware of it, the darkness becomes less deep, and slowly the first streaks of dawn creep up the sky. At first all is indistinct and shadowy. We can see but the merest outline of that which is about us. We watch; it grows lighter and lighter, until in the grey cold of the early

morning we see the waters stretching out far before us. The mist clears off, the shadows flee away, and in a little while the sun arises and kindles to warmth and fresh beauty the waters that but a moment before were so cheerless and so cold. The night is over and gone, the morning has come. "Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh."

It is a very familiar thought that there is a similarity between the order of nature and the order of grace, between the natural world and the spiritual life of man.

The Church does not hurry us without notice into the keeping of her greater Festivals. She has her dawn before her brightest days. Such are Advent and Lent; such are the vigils, fasts, and days of abstinence. The children of the Church to whom these seasons and times are realities know something of the joy which follows the observance of these days of preparation. The day has but seemed the brighter because of its contrast to the night of penitence by which it was ushered in. Still, it was to the morning that we looked. The vigil and the fast end in the Festival; the night passes into day—"Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh."

And life itself, what is its purpose? Is it not at least like the dawn in this, that life is a time of preparation for the "day of the Lord"?[1]

Early in the morning we see a light in the cottage

[1] 1 Cor. v. 5.

window, and we know that the workman is making himself ready for the day's toil.

"Man goeth forth to his work and to his labour until the evening."[1] The shadows lengthen; the toil of day, the weary work of life is over. It is only "until the evening" that man must labour; then he lays him down to rest. What shall we write on the cross that marks the Christian grave? What better than the old words of God's Book, "Until the day break and the shadows flee away"?

"Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh."

I.

Advent is a time of preparation — by works of penance — for the Birth of our Saviour; this is its immediate purpose. But just as in the prophecies of Holy Scripture that speak of the coming of our Lord to save mankind, there is often a reference also to His second coming to judge the world, so too in the teaching of the Church during Advent there is a threefold coming of our Lord continually brought before us; His coming to save, His coming by grace to the individual soul, and His coming at the end of time to be our Judge.

Advent as a definite ecclesiastical season of the Church dates back at least to the fifth century, when we find it was usual to give the people special in-

[1] Ps. civ. 23.

structions in order to prepare for the Christmas Festival. Perhaps the oldest reference which names the length of the Advent season is to be found in the second book of the *History of the Franks* by St. Gregory of Tours, where we are told that about the year 480 St. Perpetuus decreed a fast three times a week from Martinmas to Christmas. In the Greek Church the Fast of Advent is kept during forty days, beginning with the 14th of November—the Greek Festival of St. Philip. In the Anglican and Roman Communions Advent Sunday is always the nearest Sunday to the Feast of St. Andrew, whether before or after.[1] Advent is therefore a season observed by the whole Catholic Church of Christ. We have now to consider its spirit, and the way in which we may put the spirit of the Church at this time into practice.

The coming of our Lord is threefold—in three different ways at three different times. St. Bernard writes: "In the first coming, He comes in the flesh and in weakness; in the second, He comes in spirit and in power; in the third, He comes in glory and in majesty; the second coming is the means whereby we pass from the first to the third."

Peter of Blois, in his sermon *de Adventu*, says: "There are three comings of Christ; the first in the flesh, the second in the soul, the third at the judgment. The first was at midnight, according to the words of the Gospel, 'At midnight there was a cry made, Behold

[1] Book of Common Prayer.

the Bridegroom cometh!' But this first coming is long since past, for Christ has been seen on earth, and has conversed with men. We are now in the second coming, provided only we are such as that He may thus come to us; for He has said that if we love Him, He will come and make His abode with us.[1] So this coming is full of uncertainty to us, for who, save the Spirit of God, knoweth them that are of God? They who are raised out of themselves by the desire of heavenly things know indeed when He comes, but whence He cometh, or whither He goeth, they know not.[2] As for the third coming, it is most certain that it will take place, most uncertain when it will take place. . . . The first coming was humble and hidden, the second is mysterious and full of love, the third will be majestic and terrible. In His first coming, Christ was judged by men unjustly; in His second, He renders us just by His grace; in His third, He will judge all things with justice. In His first, a Lamb; in His last, a Lion; in the one between the two, the tenderest of Friends."[3]

"Watchman, what of the night?" The Church puts to each of us in Advent some such question as this. She thinks of the long time when "the people that sat in darkness"[4] waited for the coming of the Light of the world—the Sun of Righteousness. What of that night? It was not a wasted time; it was a time

[1] St. John xiv. 23.
[2] St. John iii. 8.
[3] *De Adventu*, iii.
[4] Isa. xlii. 7; St. Matt. iv. 16.

when God was preparing the Gentile and the Jew to enter into the courts of the Temple of Christ.

It is not good that we should forget the state of the world before the first coming of the Saviour. The Scriptures of the Old Testament will tell us of the comparative darkness in which even the Israel of God lived. They feared rather than loved God; they had no certain knowledge of life beyond the grave, although the future resurrection of the body was not an unknown hope; they were excluded from heaven, which had been closed by the fall of man, so that a rest in Abraham's bosom was their hope rather than the vision of God. And yet those men of old desired to see the day of the Son of Man; they strained their eyes to catch a glimpse of the Redeemer;[1] they watched for His coming as eagerly as they who toss in sleepless unrest watch for the morning.

"Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh." So the Church, thinking of all the brightness that the new light of God's Incarnate Presence on earth has brought, rejoices year by year in the coming of the Christmas Festival. She rejoices to know that "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son";[2] she rejoices that her Lord has by His death overcome death and opened unto us the gate of everlasting life, that the fast-barred gates of heaven now stand open evermore to "all

[1] St. Luke x. 24; St. John viii. 56.
[2] St. John iii. 16.

believers." She rejoices therefore to welcome her coming Redeemer, and would have us realise what that first coming has done for the world. "The morning cometh" after the long, weary night; after the bondage, freedom; after captivity, redemption.

Well may she exclaim—

> "Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
> Shall come to thee, O Israel."

If then we would enter into Advent with the Church there must be this note of joyful welcome in our hearts. We must watch even as they who see the shadows passing and the dawn breaking upon a fallen world. "Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh." And then there is our Lord's benediction on our vigil—"Blessed is he that watcheth."

This, however, is not enough—there is more to learn if we would be penetrated with the spirit of the Advent mystery.

"Watchman, what of the night?" Not now the night of an unredeemed world of the past, but of our own spiritual state. The Apostle writes in the Epistle for Advent Sunday: "Knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not

in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying."[1]

These were the words that came to St. Augustine of Hippo while he was yet outside the Christian Church, and completed his conversion. Have they an Advent message for us? It will profit us but little to know that the light has come, if it has not shined in our own hearts. Christ must "dwell in" our "hearts by faith";[2] Christ in us must be our "hope of glory";[3] the "love of Christ" must be "shed abroad"[4] in our own hearts if we are to make such use of His coming in great humility, that when He comes again in power and great majesty we may be found acceptable in His sight. We have been illuminated with His light in Baptism; are we dwelling in the light? Are we walking as children of light? Are we able to say, "My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour"? Here we can at best see but "through a glass darkly"—but has His coming brought to us a growing light, shining more and more in our hearts unto the perfect day when we shall see Him face to face?

Advent is a time of self-examination—a time of looking into the darkness of our own hearts, in order that we may watch for the morning light of His more complete indwelling. "Watchman, what of the night?" Can we say, "My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning"? "*Dominus illumi-*

[1] Rom. xiii. 13.
[2] Eph. iii. 17.
[3] Col. i. 27.
[4] Rom. v. 5.

natio mea"—"the Lord is my light"? If so, we are sure of His blessing. "Blessed is he that watcheth."

And thus we pass to the watching for His coming again to be our Judge, for the great and terrible day of the Lord. That day is almost always spoken of in Holy Scripture as a day of fear and a day of mourning. "The day of the Lord is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?"[1]

"Who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth?"[2]

"And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"[3]

It is with this thought in her mind that the Church falls down before the majesty of the great Judge, and in the *Dies Iræ* pleads for mercy. The holiest of the saints cannot stand before Him of Whom it is said, "Thou only art holy."

> "What shall I, frail man, be pleading,
> Who for me be interceding,
> When the just are mercy needing?"

In that day there will be but one ground for trust and hope—and that will be in the fact that He Who is the Judge once died to satisfy for our sins. Then we shall have but one plea—

> "Think, kind Jesu, my salvation
> Caused Thy wondrous Incarnation,
> Leave me not to reprobation.
> Faint and weary Thou hast sought me,
> On the Cross of suffering bought me;
> Shall such grace be vainly brought me?"

[1] Joel ii. 11. [2] Mal. iii. 2. [3] 1 Peter iv. 18.

And yet the Church would not have only fear in our thoughts of this great day—she would have us try to "love His appearing."[1] She would have us very humbly gain hope from His first coming to meet Him with joy when He comes again for judgment. We do not know *when* "the day of the Lord will come." It may yet be far off, or it may be near; but we must "watch for the morning," "lest coming suddenly," He find us "sleeping."[2] The night is far spent, the day is at hand—watch!

"And when a shadow falls across the window of my room,
Where I am working my appointed task,
I lift my head to watch the door, and ask
If He is come.
And the angel answers sweetly
In my home—
'Only a few more shadows
And He will come.'"

"Blessed is he that watcheth."

II.

And now, how shall we try and put in practice this spirit of the Church during the Advent season? In the first place, we must enter upon the keeping of Advent with prayer to God the Holy Ghost that He—the Spirit of Life—may help us in our work. Without the Holy Ghost we can do nothing. It is His work to form Christ in our hearts, and to apply to our own souls all the "plenteous redemption,"[3] all the

[1] 2 Tim. iv. 8. [2] St. Mark xiii. 36. [3] Ps. cxxx. 7.

infinite merits of Jesus Christ. Let us then enter upon Advent with the prayer, "Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire."

We must also endeavour to dwell, especially in our more usual forms of prayer, upon such sentences as speak of the coming of Jesus Christ and of His kingdom—"Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done." He is coming to purchase with His own blood the kingdoms of the world, that they may become "the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ,"[1] over which "He shall reign for ever and ever."

Filled with a holy desire to hasten this reign of Christ, we shall offer Him our own hearts that He may be our King and Lawgiver, and we His obedient, loyal, and loving subjects. When in the prayers of the Church we sing, "O God, make speed to save us," we shall let His Advent be in our mind, and so also into the *Venite*, the Psalms, the Lessons, and the Collects we shall read the Advent message.

At the Eucharist especially, when He comes to His Altar Throne, we shall endeavour to realise that He, Who once came to suffer and die, now comes to represent His Sacrifice, and to offer Himself to each one of us, in order to prepare us for the judgment.

"When the archangel's trump shall sound,
And the dead again shall rise,
O, in that dread Judgment Day,
Good Lord, remember me."

[1] Rev. xi. 15.

It is especially when we draw near to the Holy Table that He draws near to us—"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me."[1]

In this way the past and present comings of our Lord will lead us back again to our chief Advent thought—His return to be our Judge. The warning voice of our Commination Service may well be in our mind—"Let us (remembering the dreadful judgment hanging over our heads, and always ready to fall upon us) return unto our Lord God, with all contrition and meekness of heart; bewailing and lamenting our sinful life, acknowledging and confessing our offences, and seeking to bring forth worthy fruits of penance. For now is the axe put unto the root of the trees, so that every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God: He shall pour down rain upon the sinners, snares, fire and brimstone, storm and tempest; this shall be their portion to drink. For lo, the Lord is come out of His place to visit the wickedness of such as dwell upon the earth. But who may abide the day of His coming? Who shall be able to endure when He appeareth? His fan is in His hand, and He will purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn the chaff with unquenchable fire. The day of the Lord cometh as a

[1] Rev. iii. 20.

thief in the night: and when men shall say, Peace, and all things are safe, then shall sudden destruction come upon them, as sorrow cometh upon a woman travailing with child, and they shall not escape. Then shall appear the wrath of God in the day of vengeance, which obstinate sinners, through the stubbornness of their heart, have heaped unto themselves; which despised the goodness, patience, and long-sufferance of God, when He calleth them continually to repentance. Then shall they call upon Me, (saith the Lord,) but I will not hear; they shall seek Me early, but they shall not find Me; and that, because they hated knowledge, and received not the fear of the Lord, but abhorred My counsel, and despised My correction. Then shall it be too late to knock when the door shall be shut; and too late to cry for mercy when it is the time of justice. O terrible voice of most just judgment, which shall be pronounced upon them, when it shall be said unto them, Go, ye cursed, into the fire everlasting, which is prepared for the devil and his angels. Therefore, brethren, take we heed betime, while the day of salvation lasteth; for the night cometh, when none can work. But let us, while we have the light, believe in the light, and walk as children of the light; that we be not cast into utter darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth. Let us not abuse the goodness of God, Who calleth us mercifully to amendment, and of His endless pity promiseth us forgiveness of that which is past, if with a perfect

and true heart we return unto Him. For though our sins be as red as scarlet, they shall be made white as snow; and though they be like purple, yet they shall be made white as wool. Turn ye (saith the Lord) from all your wickedness, and your sin shall not be your destruction. Cast away from you all your ungodliness that ye have done: Make you new hearts, and a new spirit. Wherefore will ye die, O ye house of Israel, seeing that I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God? Turn ye then, and ye shall live. Although we have sinned, yet have we an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He is the propitiation for our sins. For He was wounded for our offences, and smitten for our wickedness. Let us therefore return unto Him, Who is the merciful receiver of all true penitent sinners; assuring ourselves that He is ready to receive us, and most willing to pardon us, if we come unto Him with faithful repentance; if we submit ourselves unto Him, and from henceforth walk in His ways; if we will take His easy yoke and light burden upon us, to follow Him in lowliness, patience, and charity, and be ordered by the governance of His Holy Spirit; seeking always His glory, and serving Him duly in our vocation with thanksgiving: This if we do, Christ will deliver us from the curse of the law, and from the extreme malediction which shall light upon them that shall be set on the left hand; and He will set us on His right hand, and give us the gracious benediction of His

Father, commanding us to take possession of His glorious kingdom: Unto which He vouchsafe to bring us all, for His infinite mercy. Amen."

"We believe that Thou shalt come to be our Judge. We therefore pray Thee, help Thy servants, whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy Precious Blood. Make them to be numbered with Thy saints in glory everlasting."[1]

PASSAGES SUGGESTED FOR READING DURING THE WEEK.

(1) Gen. iii. 15. This is the first prophecy of the coming of Christ to redeem. During four thousand years men waited and watched for its fulfilment. (*Cf.* 2 St. Peter iii. 4, 8, 9.)

(2) Deut. xviii. 15–22. Jesus Christ is the Prophet as well as the Priest and King. All that our Lord foretold has come, or will come, to pass. Our duty is to hearken to and obey His voice.

(3) Isaiah ii. 2. This prophecy of the coming of the universal kingdom—the Catholic Church—suggests the question as to how far we obey the laws of the kingdom? (See *v.* 3.)

(4) Ezek. xxxiv. 23–26. We are here reminded of the unity of the Church under its Head—the "One Shepherd"—Jesus Christ. He defends His Church, and bestows "showers of blessing" upon it.

(5) Daniel ii. 44, 45. Here again is a prophecy of Christ's coming and His kingdom. Jesus Christ will reign "for ever and ever." The Church Militant and Expectant are but the training school for the Church Triumphant.

[1] *Te Deum.*

(6) Zech. iii. 1–6. In this prophecy we find the two Advents—to redeem and judge—are spoken of together. We may learn that the object of Christ's coming as the Saviour was to enable us to meet Him as our Judge.

"We believe that Thou shalt come to be our Judge. We therefore pray Thee, help Thy servants, whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy Precious Blood."

III.

SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Reading the Apocalypse

Prophecy

"He giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding: He revealeth the deep and secret things: He knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with Him." (Dan. ii. 21, 22.)

Jesus Christ

"Whoso readeth, let him understand." (St. Matt. xxiv. 15.)

The Soul

"When Thy word goeth forth, it giveth light and understanding unto the simple." (Ps. cxix. 130.)

III.

Reading the Apocalypse

IT would be an interesting and useful study to consider the various blessings pronounced in Holy Scripture.

Those of the Psalms: "Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him";[1] "Blessed is he whose unrighteousness is forgiven";[2] "Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house";[3] "Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord";[4] "Blessed are those that are undefiled in the way";[5] "Blessed are they that keep His testimonies."[6]

Those of the Prophets: "Blessed are all they that wait for Him";[7] "Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters";[8] "Blessed is he that waiteth."[9]

Those pronounced by our Lord Himself: The eight Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount;[10] the blessing on those who saw the days of the Son of Man, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see";[11] or again, on those who walk by faith and not

[1] Ps. ii. 12. [2] Ps. xxxii. 1. [3] Ps. lxxxiv. 4.
[4] Ps. cxii. 1. [5] Ps. cxix. 1. [6] Ps. cxix. 2.
[7] Isa. xxx. 18. [8] Isa. xxxii. 20. [9] Dan. xii. 12.
[10] St. Matt. v. [11] St. Luke 10, 23.

by sight, "Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed."[1] Or we might limit ourselves to the study of the blessings in the one book of the Revelation of St. John, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord";[2] "Blessed is he that watcheth";[3] "Blessed are they who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb";[4] "Blessed is he that hath part in the first resurrection";[5] "Blessed are they who do His commandments."[6] But there is one blessing we must consider more carefully, for, in a sense, it includes the others, and that is the blessing—twice repeated—on those who read and keep the sayings recorded in the Apocalypse. This blessing, which we find in the first chapter—"Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein"[7]—is reiterated by St. John in the last page of his Revelation, "Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book."[8]

Why is this special blessing twice pronounced on those who read and keep the sayings of this book?

We can perhaps arrive at the answer to this question only by a consideration of the nature and scope of the vision. It begins after the Ascension of our Lord; it reveals His majesty, His glory, His heavenly work; it foretells the trials and sufferings, as well as the good works and the failures of the Church on earth. But

[1] St. John xx. 29.
[2] Rev. xiv. 13.
[3] Rev. xvi. 15.
[4] Rev. xix 9.
[5] Rev. xx. 6.
[6] Rev. xxii. 14.
[7] Rev. i. 3.
[8] Rev. xxii. 7.

above all it speaks throughout in burning words of the great message that the Crucified, Risen, Ascended Lord shall come again. That is the vision—the second coming of Jesus Christ "in His glorious majesty to judge both the quick and the dead."

We read in the first chapter, "Behold, He cometh with the clouds, and every eye shall see Him";[1] "Grace be unto you, and peace, from Him which is, and which was, and which is to come";[2] and the last words in the closing page correspond with these opening sentences, "Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."[3] Just as a blessing rests on those "who read the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein," so at the end of the Apocalypse stands that terrible threat, "I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things that are written in this book."[4]

There can then be little doubt that there is a very special importance attached to the study of this last book of Holy Scripture. The Apocalypse is unquestionably a book that contains impenetrable mysteries.

[1] Rev. i. 7.
[2] Rev. i. 4.
[3] Rev. xxii. 20.
[4] Rev. xxii. 18, 19.

Speculation upon some of its more symbolical passages has resulted among extreme Protestants in uncharitable and even ridiculous conclusions as to the character of the greater part of the Western Church, and the evident absurdities of these commentators has tended to discourage the reading of this book altogether.

Nevertheless, the inspired Apostle must have had in his mind a clear knowledge that the book contained much that was not beyond our power to make use of, and of the great importance of its lessons.

The coming of our Lord Jesus Christ to be our Judge is the chief message of the Revelation. Our Lord's own frequent command, "Watch," is the spirit of its inspired pages. Now, in the first place, everything that helps to a more exact knowledge of our Divine Lord must be "blessed" to His children. The Holy Gospels show us Jesus Christ in the humiliation of His incarnate life on earth; the manger and the Cross, the wilderness and Gethsemane, the homeless life and the outcast death, all speak of the wonderful abasement of Him Who was "despised and rejected of men; a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief."[1] It is true that now and again there comes some voice from "the excellent glory," some brightness about His person; but speaking generally, the glory of the Eternal Son was hidden during the three-and-thirty years. In another book of Holy Scripture

[1] Isa. liii. 3.

we have a glimpse of "the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God,"[1] but the glory soon passes away, and only once again is there a "heavenly vision," when at the conversion of St. Paul the Saviour shows Himself in "a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun."[2]

It is left for the Apocalypse of St. John to reveal the intense and awful grandeur of the Ascended Christ. Remember it is the beloved disciple who writes; he who before the Passion had been so reverently and affectionately familiar with his Lord, that he reclined on Jesus' breast at the last Supper. And yet what does he say of the effect of the vision of his Lord when He appeared to him during his exile in Patmos "for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ"?[3]

"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last. . . . And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks One like unto the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire: and His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a

[1] Acts vii. 56. [2] Acts xxvi. 13. [3] Rev. i. 2.

furnace; and His voice as the sound of many waters. And He had in His right hand seven stars: and out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and His countenance was as the sun shineth in His strength. And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."[1]

So glorious, so divinely grand and awful was the vision, that St. John, the disciple who once had leant on Jesus' bosom, "fell at His feet as dead."

"It was written of Jerusalem, 'Glorious things are spoken of thee, thou city of God'; but of the Son of God, how far more glorious! Nor does He, the King of glory, shrink from speaking these things of Himself, and yet I know not whether amid all the magnificent titles which He bears there is any title, any blazon, any style more magnificent than this title under which He makes Himself known to His Apostle, 'I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.'"[2]

In this Apocalypse we shall find an inexhaustible mine of devotional matter for prayer and meditation, and more especially for prayer and worship in the

[1] Rev. i. 10–18.

[2] Quotation from MS. notes of an author whose name I cannot trace.

presence of the Blessed Sacrament. It is *there*, before the earthly Throne of the Incarnate Word, that we have need of the spirit of holy fear, as well as of affectionate trust and confidence.

It is *there* that He Who "liveth and was dead" appears to each Christian soul to elicit that worship which is the best preparation for the adoration of the unveiled revelation of His Presence in heaven.

They who attentively study this book of the Revelation cannot fail to be struck with the entire originality of much that is contained in it; for example, in the Epistles to the Seven Churches—"their entire unlikeness, in some points at least, to anything else in Scripture. Contemplate, for instance, the titles of Christ here, 'the Amen,' 'the Faithful and True Witness,' 'the Beginning of the creation of God,' 'He that hath the seven Spirits of God,' and others which I might name. While the analogy of faith is perfectly preserved, while there is no difficulty in harmonising what is here taught of Christ's person and office with that which is taught elsewhere, yet how wholly new a series of titles are there. It is the same with the promises; some, it is true, as 'the tree of life,'[1] 'the crown of life,' 'the new name,' have been anticipated in other parts of Scripture, yet how many appear here for the first time, and set forth what St. Augustine so grandly calls 'beatæ vitæ magna secreta,' under aspects as novel as they are animating and alluring, such as 'the hidden manna,'

[1] Rev. ii. 7 10, 17.

the 'white stone,' the 'white raiment,' the 'pillar in the temple of God,' 'the morning star.'" [1]

The majesty of Jesus Christ is also brought before the mind in such titles as "The first begotten from the dead," "The Prince of the kings of the earth," "King of kings, Lord of lords," "He that is holy, He that is true," "The Word of God," the "Lord God Almighty," "the First and the Last."

There is, indeed, no book in all the inspired volume of Holy Scripture that is more rich in food for the soul than this Apocalypse of St. John. "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy"; "Blessed," because here is revealed the continuity of the life of Christ—and we who have traced in the Gospel story the way of the Cross may here follow the Ascended Lord, and see something of His majesty, power, and heavenly work. And yet again, "Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of this book," because it contains the portraiture of all stages of the spiritual states, whether of good or evil, in which the Christian soul may find itself. Is not our faith confirmed when we remember that already the judgment threatened against certain Churches has been accomplished? "In the four Epistles to the Churches (or to the individual soul, if we take them in that way) the four with uneven numbers, and unto those only, the Apostle has introduced the formula, 'repent,' followed by a threat in the event of obstinate hardness

[1] Archbishop Trench on *Epistles to the Seven Churches*, preface, p. vii.

of heart. Is it not a most remarkable fact that the Churches thus threatened and reprimanded are, with the exception of one—Pergamum—entirely effaced from the map of Christendom; whilst the three which are the subjects of our Lord's approval have lasted through the ages, and are flourishing even to this day?"[1]

"Blessed" then, indeed, are they that pay heed to the warnings of this book; "blessed" are they who read it with their eye fixed on the "Faithful and True Witness"; "Which was, and is, and is to come." "Blessed" is he whose ear is listening for the faintest sound of His chariot as He draws near for judgment.

The reading of the Apocalypse will therefore necessarily help our worship; it will suggest to us new acts of faith and adoration. It will, however, do more than this—it will aid us in our self-examination. In the light of the great white Throne, before which the heaven and earth flee away, the mists of self-delusion will in a measure be dispelled, and we shall learn to know ourselves as we grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. The warnings and threats will speak to our own soul, and help us to acts of contrition and good resolve; we shall learn to "be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, and are ready to die."[2]

Or, perhaps, we need lifting out of ourselves. If so, how magnificent is the picture drawn for us of the

[1] *Studies on the New Testament*, p. 304, F. GODET.
[2] Rev. iii. 2.

worship of the Church Triumphant, where "Christ is all and in all"![1] How clearly we seem to behold the very Throne of God—the Eternal Father—in the fourth chapter; and then the Throne of the Incarnate Word —"the Lamb as it had been slain";[2] the reverent adoration of the heavenly hosts, and of the redeemed. Do not our ears almost catch the echo of that song, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing"?[3] so that as we read we are ourselves moved to add our own voice to the choirs of heaven, and before the Sacramental Presence of Christ on earth to offer our adoration in the ascription of "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, unto Him that sitteth upon the throne!"[4] "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein, for the time is at hand."

These words, "the time is at hand," recall the peculiar appropriateness of the Revelation of St. John for Advent reading. The Church of England begins this book in her public offices on the Third Sunday in Advent, and reads lections from it during the last days of Advent and the Christmas Octave. There is, therefore, ecclesiastical sanction for the connection of the Apocalypse with Advent.

The words, "the time is at hand," bring us back to

[1] Col. iii. 11.
[2] Rev. v. 6.
[3] Rev. v. 12.
[4] Rev. v. 13.

the great lesson of the whole book, "Behold, He cometh"; "Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments," "Blessed," that is to say, is he who in all the work of life keeps the eye of the soul fixed on the Pattern Life, and does all as in the Master's sight; "Blessed" is he who guards the wedding garment of the righteousness of Christ, given in Holy Baptism, or who finds again in repentance the garment of the grace of God lost by mortal sin.

"This coming of Christ, from the time of the Ascension to that of the Parousia, is therefore the true subject of the Apocalypse, just as His first coming, between the fall of man and the Incarnation, was the true subject of Old Testament prophecy.

"'Behold, He shall come,'[1] said the last of the Prophets, at the highest summit of ancient revelation, speaking of the Messiah Jehovah.

"The history of the world, in its essential character, is summed up in these three sayings: He is coming; He has come; He will come again.

"It is upon this idea that the whole plan of the Apocalyptic drama rests. On every journey we contemplate as distinct from one another the starting point, the journey itself, and the arrival. The *starting point* in the *coming* of the Apocalypse is the state of the Church at the time the author receives the vision. We find it described i.-iii. The *journey* consists in all

[1] Mal. iii. 1.

the preparations which lead up to the final appearing of the Lord. They are described iv.–xix. 10.

"Lastly, the *arrival* is the Parousia itself with all its consequences. From xix. to the end of the book."[1]

Thus the Apocalypse is the completion of the whole scheme of revelation given in the Holy Scriptures. It furnishes what appears to be the only clue to the mystery of the origin of evil, in its revelation of the "war in heaven";[2] it graphically describes the enormous forces of evil at work in the Church on earth, and the final triumph of "the Seed of the woman." In this way the Revelation of St. John links the first and last words of Scripture together.

Genesis is completed by the Apocalypse. He who is revealed as the "First and Last, the Beginning and the Ending," has made the whole of His inspired word to centre around His first and His second coming.

"What a grand whole! What book can be compared to the aggregate of the books of the Bible? How can we fail to recognise in the beginning, middle, and end the finger of God, and exclaim with Jacob in Bethel, 'The Lord is in this place, and I knew it not! This is none other but the house of God!'"[1]

Let us not forget the benediction, "Behold, I come quickly. Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein, for the time is at hand."[3]

[1] *Studies on the New Testament*, F. GODET, D.D.
[2] Rev. xii. 7.
[3] Rev. i. 3.

PASSAGES FOR READING.

(1) Rev. 1. 5. Christ is "the First begotten from the dead"—the first Who arose by His own power, and so Himself overcame death.

(2) Rev. xv. 3. Christ is the "King of Saints," because all the Saints owe their sanctity to His royal bounty. "Of His fulness," writes St. John, "have we all received."

(3) Rev. xvii. 14. Christ is "King of kings"—the supreme Ruler over all nations and kindreds and peoples. It is ours to obey, serve, and love our King.

(4) Rev. xix. 13. Christ is called the "Word of God" for this among other reasons: He reveals the heart of God to man. By our words we make known to others what is in our mind. God has "spoken unto us by His Son."

(5) Rev. xxii. 16. Christ is the "Morning Star," because His coming to the dark world has brought light, increasing in brightness. First, as the "Star" of Bethlehem, and then flooding the world with light as the "Sun of Righteousness." (*Cf.* Num. xxiv. 17; 1 St. Peter i. 19.)

(6) Rev. xxii. 13. Christ is "Alpha and Omega," "the beginning and the end," "the first and the last."

St. John tells us He was "in the beginning," but what is meant by Jesus Christ being "the end"? Is it not that He "is all and in all"?

IV.

THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

The Messenger of God

Prophecy

"The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." (Isa. xl. 3.)

"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord." (Mal. iv. 5.)

Jesus Christ

"Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist. . . . And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come." (St. Matt. xi. 11, 14.)

The Soul

"The Lord is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation : He is my God, and I will prepare Him an habitation." (Exod. xv. 2.)

IV.

The Messenger of God

THE ministry of St. John Baptist holds a very important place both in prophecy and in the Gospel story.

The four Evangelists do not each speak of the Nativity of our Lord, of the Circumcision, or of the events of the Sacred Infancy. In fact, until the entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday—that is, until the beginning of the Passion story—the Evangelists are unanimous only in recording one of our Lord's miracles, and a few of His scattered sayings.

It is therefore very remarkable that we have a fourfold account of the short ministry of St. John Baptist. In her Advent gospels the Church has chosen two out of the four that are read at the Altar on the Sundays with reference to the work and ministry of the Forerunner of Jesus Christ.

On the third Sunday in Advent he is referred to more especially as the messenger who was sent to prepare the way of the Lord—as the pattern of the Christian priesthood—in "turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just." On the fourth

Sunday St. John answers the question, "Who art thou?" and gives his witness to Jesus Christ, saying, "He it is, Who coming after me is preferred before me, Whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose."[1]

St. John's life may be divided into three periods. The first is the time of his childhood and early youth—spent, perhaps, in frequent intercourse with the Child Jesus, Who was six months younger than St. John. It is not surprising that sacred art has loved to dwell upon these early years, and to picture the two boys at the knee of the Virgin Mother. More surprising is it that the youth of Jesus Christ—the period between the return to Nazareth after the visit to the Temple at the age of twelve, and the beginning of His ministry—has not been more dwelt upon in sacred art.

This first period of St. John's life ended—we do not know at what age—by his withdrawal into the wilderness. He "was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel."[2] Here he spent some time in preparation for his mission. His life was passed in the rough, free, bracing atmosphere of the solitudes of nature. Probably the "desert" is the barren waste which extends along the western shore of the Dead Sea. He was clothed in camel's skin; his food, locusts and wild honey; and, leading this ascetic life—in silence and solitude—"the child waxed strong in spirit."

The second period is shorter, and covers the few months of his public ministry—the time when he was,

[1] St. John i. 27. [2] St. Luke i. 80.

indeed, "the voice of one crying in the wilderness," when "Jerusalem, and all Judæa, and all the region round about Jordan"[1] went out to hear his message, attracted by the report of his asceticism, his fiery zeal and plain speaking. St. John was no messenger of pleasant tidings, no preacher of smooth things, conciliating the goodwill of the people by flattery and compromise of the truth. He trusted to influence the multitude by the preaching of repentance and remission of sins. He does not seem to have contemplated the popular methods of preaching the Gospel that are in vogue nowadays when we think to "get hold of the people" by topical discourses, lectures on social or political economy, rustic picnics, excursions, dances, sports, flower services, lantern services, raffles, *café-chantants*, and the rest. No, "John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. And there went out unto him all the land of Judæa, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, *confessing their sins*."[2] Thus, in preaching and hearing confessions, in baptizing with the "baptism of repentance," passed away the second period of St. John's life.

The fame of the mission preacher on the banks of the Jordan had reached Herod—the Tetrarch of Galilee and Peræa, who was living incestuously with the wife of his brother Philip—son of Herod the Great. St. John is called from the wilderness to the court.

[1] St. Matt. iii. 3, 5. [2] St. Mark i. 4, 5.

Here he was to enter upon the sharpest trial of his character.

To reprove and rebuke the common people—that, perhaps, was not very difficult. The multitude are usually willing to be taught, and are not too self-righteous to own their sin when it is brought home to them by one whom they respect. It was afterwards to be written of those to whom our Lord preached: "The common people heard Him gladly."[1] But it was otherwise with the rulers of Church and State. There is no doubt as to the answer to be given to the indignant question of the chief priests: "Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on Him?"[2]

St. John had then to face a sharp trial of his courage and singleness of purpose. To live a hard life in the desert and preach repentance to the multitude was one thing—to hold fast to asceticism and plain speaking amidst the luxury and profligate living of a royal palace was quite another. Many a good man has broken down under such a trial, but St. John was firm as a rock. Herod had, no doubt, thought when he invited St. John to preach in his presence that he was to hear a man who would know how to adapt his message to his hearers.

St. John would understand that polite ears must not be offended by such words as "sin" and "repentance." For the common herd that sort of thing was of course quite needful, but St. John would no doubt prove that

[1] St. Mark xii. 37. [2] St. John vii. 48.

Herod's condescension had not been misplaced when he honoured the poor, rough zealot with his commands to appear before him as a select preacher. It was therefore with amazed indignation that Herod listened to the startling denunciation of his own life that fell from the prophet's lips. It seemed almost incredible that he—the king—should be so insulted by one of the very inferior order of teachers. Was he not on friendly terms with the chief priests, with the scribes, with the Pharisees?

Did not they represent the Church, and was it not their duty to rebuke, if indeed reproof could be for a moment needed by a king?

And yet who among these dignitaries of the Church had ever dared to pronounce such a sentence as this, that fell like a thunderbolt among the listening courtiers, and in the very presence of Herodias herself? "It is not lawful for thee to have her."[1]

We can picture the consternation of the group around the throne; the confusion of the daughter of Herodias, and the venomous hatred that sprang up in the heart of her mother. But Herod himself was not altogether a bad man. His conscience was touched, and if it had not been for his weakness and his fear of the spiteful tongues of the court gossips he would doubtless have spared the Baptist. As it was, we read that he "sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison."[2] But he was not willing to do more, for he

[1] St. Matt. xiv. 4. [2] St. Mark vi. 17.

"feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly."[1]

But Herod had gone too far, his soul was no longer his own, and so St. John's life was sacrificed to the spite of the two women—Herodias and her daughter—by the weakness of the king, who dared not break a rash oath because of "their sakes which sat with him" at the banquet. "And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison, and brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel: and the damsel gave it to her mother. And when his disciples heard of it, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb."[2]

In considering a little more fully the conduct that led St. John to prison and to death, we cannot but remember that in our collect for the third Sunday in Advent his example is put forward as a pattern to the "ministers and stewards" of God's "mysteries."[3] St. John was not one of the rulers of the Church, but there were chief priests, Pharisees, and scribes zealous for the law; why had not *they* reproved Herod?

In our own land, and in our own part of the Church—for we need not be too critical of other parts of Christendom while so much is wrong at home—the treatment by officials of the Church and State of the marriage law furnishes a sufficiently near parallel to

[1] St. Mark vi. 20. [2] St. Mark vi. 27–29. [3] 1 Cor. iv. 1.

the guilty silence of the Church of old in the presence of Herod's incestuous connection with Herodias. What has been the action of our "chief priests" in relation to the Divorce Act? Has a single voice in high places been lifted to say, "It is not lawful" to put asunder and allow the so-called remarriage of those whom God has joined together?

Do we not need to pray for prelates who in the spirit of St. John Baptist will dare to defend the rights of the Church, and the laws of the Church, against the usurpations and interference of the secular power?

II.

In turning now from the events which led to the imprisonment of St. John Baptist to the period of the imprisonment itself, we are brought face to face with the question he sent his disciples to ask our Lord, "Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?"[1]

St. John at the time of his imprisonment is still a young man of but thirty years of age. Life, we may well suppose, was dear to him. He had loved the liberty of the wild sweep of the wilderness and free air of heaven, and now in the gloomy dungeons of the fortress on the shores of the Dead Sea he is kept a prisoner, awaiting death. He is cut off from the multitudes who but a short time ago thronged

[1] St. Matt. xi. 3.

around him to hear the message of the near approach of the kingdom of God; he is alone, except for the few faithful disciples who are brave enough to own their master even in the day of his disgrace.

These few souls are St. John's one remaining earthly consolation, the one tie that holds his strong, loving heart bound to this present life.

These disciples hear of the fame of Jesus, and they carry the news to the Baptist. Before his imprisonment they had said to him, "Rabbi, He that was with thee beyond Jordan, to Whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to Him"; and St. John had at once replied, "A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. . . . He must increase, but I must decrease."[1]

And now the disciples bring to him further tidings of the truth of his prophecy—"He must increase, but I must decrease," for they have seen the new Prophet raise the dead to life, so that "there came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great Prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited His people."[2]

The disciples, however, are but the more determined to remain with St. John; they will not leave him even though all men flock to the new Teacher. It is then that we read, "Now when John had heard in the

[1] St. John iii. 26-30. [2] St. Luke vii. 16.

prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, and said unto Him, Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?"[1]

(1) What is the significance of this message? Does it mean that St. John himself was in doubt? That after his strong witness to Jesus Christ, after the Baptism, and the voice from heaven, he yet in the dungeon feared lest he had been mistaken, and that all his faith and trust had been a delusion? So some have thought. The very brevity of the message has been taken as an expression of doubting sorrow. "The enthusiastic child of nature, who had roved in the desert free as the air he breathed, is now suddenly arrested, and his strong restless heart limited by four walls of a dungeon. And there he lay startled. An eagle cleaving the air with motionless wing, and in the midst of his career brought from the black cloud by an arrow to the ground, and looking round with his wild, large eye, stunned, and startled there; just such was the free prophet of the wilderness, when Herod's guards had curbed his noble flight and left him alone in the dungeon. In John's prison, solitude, misgiving, black doubt, seem for a time to have taken possession of the prophet's soul."[2]

There seems, however, not sufficient ground to justify the conclusion that either sadness or doubt dictated the question. St. John is always terse. Beside the river the cry is brief: "Repent." To Herod he makes

[1] St. Matt. xi. 2, 3. [2] Robertson's Sermons.

no long, introductory apology, but at once with plain forcible speech declares, "It is not lawful for thee to have her." And now he has an object which will best be attained by concentration upon one point in the answer of the new Teacher to the short question, "Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?" Jesus Christ, it is true, has so far accepted the witness of St. John, but He has not in plain words declared that He is the long-expected Messiah. St. John has again and again protested that he himself is but the "voice" crying aloud to prepare the way for another; he has denied that he is the Messiah, and his disciples have so far accepted his declaration.

It is true that Elijah—the type of St. John—was perplexed with doubt, and "requested for himself that he might die."[1] Later on we read of St. Thomas being doubtful of the Resurrection; and doubt has been from time to time a sore trial to some of God's true people. Still, there does not seem sufficient reason for thinking that St. John's question was prompted by doubt.

(2) Another interpretation of the question, "Art Thou He that should come," etc., is that St. John was impatient of his imprisonment and intended the words for something of a rebuke, as if he would say, "If Thou art the mighty deliverer for Whom I have been preparing the way, how is it that I am left in disgrace, to linger in prison? Why dost Thou not

[1] 1 Kings xix. 4.

obtain my freedom?" Here, again, we read of Saints who have been wanting in trust and patience. Moses "spake unadvisedly with his lips."[1] It *was* perplexing, from a human point of view, that all St. John's faithful work should end in prison and in death. We may, however, again question this interpretation of his words, as it seems inconsistent with the office of St. John, and with his own declaration, "He must increase, but I must decrease"; it is also not easy to reconcile this view of St. John's question with our Lord's answer to it, and His praise of the Baptist.

Both these interpretations may be set aside as, at all events, not necessarily involved in the drift of the question, "Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?"

The character of St. John, his office as the witness to Christ, and his knowledge of our Lord, seem to make it at least very improbable that he himself either doubted or grew impatient in the prison. St. John comes before us in Holy Scripture as a very strong, manly character. He is throughout his life filled with an Elias-like flame of zeal for God and the coming Messiah. His birth is not without special marks of a Divine choice, and his vocation is revealed by no less an archangel than Gabriel, who was entrusted with the other greater annunciation of the Incarnation of the Eternal Word. St. John was to be "great in the sight of the *Lord*." He does not

[1] Ps. cvi. 33.

shrink before Herod from declaring the truth; he is a strong and faithful witness, not "a reed shaken with the wind."[1]

Add to this the nature of St. John's office, as the "voice" proclaiming the Presence of the Messiah, not doubts concerning Him. "There standeth One among you, Whom ye know not. This is He of Whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for He was before me;"[2] and his answer to the Priests and Levites when they sent to ask him, "Who art Thou?"[3]

And, lastly, St. John's knowledge of Christ was greater probably than that of any other person save the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph.

St. John in his declarations to the people shows that he knew the Divine Nature of our Lord. St. John was the elder of the two, and yet he does not hesitate to say of Jesus Christ, "He was before me." He proclaimed also a knowledge of the redemption of the world when, pointing to our Lord, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."[4] He, moreover, witnessed to our Lord not only as the Divine Redeemer, but as the future Judge Who should "gather the wheat into His garner," and burn the chaff with "fire unquenchable."[5] The Baptism of our Lord had also convinced St. John of the fact of His being "He that should come." "John

[1] St. Matt. xi. 7. [2] St. John i. 26, 30. [3] St. John i. 19.
[4] St. John i. 29. [5] St. Luke iii. 17.

bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him. And I knew Him not: but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon Whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God."[1] Could any witness be more unfaltering, or leave less room for doubt?

So, again, our Lord's witness to St. John is not in keeping with the idea that St. John wavered or despaired in the prison. "What went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send My messenger before Thy face, which shall prepare Thy way before Thee. Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if ye will receive it, this is Elias which was for to come."[2]

What, then, may be the meaning of St. John's mission of his two disciples to ask Jesus, "Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?"

If St. John, from all he had seen of Jesus Christ

[1] St. John i. 32–34. [2] St. Matt. xi. 9–14.

and His works, was quite sure that He was the Messiah and the Son of God, why should he ask such a question?

May we not take it that the knowledge and the character of St. John made him anxious that even imprisonment should not hinder his carrying on his office as the witness to Christ, and the Forerunner who should make straight the way of the Lord?

St. John's office was to lead men to Christ. His work is not accomplished until he has transferred all who follow him to the Messiah. Now these few faithful disciples alone remain attached to St. John, and probably determined to remain his disciples all the more because so many have forsaken him for Christ. St. John, however, cannot accept this loyal adhesion to himself. He will remain "the voice"—immaterial, impersonal, as it were—sounding but for one purpose —to witness to another.

In sending these disciples to Christ, St. John doubtless knew what result must follow—they would be converted and become followers of the Messiah. They would then see there was no rivalry between the Baptist and Jesus Christ. They would understand that St. John lingered on, waiting until he had passed on every disciple to the Messiah. While one soul rejected Jesus Christ in order to abide by the Forerunner his mission was not accomplished. When all had accepted the witness he had given, and acted upon it, then, and only then, could the faithful servant say like Simeon, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace,

according to Thy word. For mine eyes hath seen Thy salvation."

Hence, "when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ," he rejoiced. If Christ was Himself doing these mighty works, then it must be that his witness was needed no more, and his end be near at hand. If Christ was working the great works foretold of the Messiah, then those very works will bear the witness to His mission that hitherto has been borne by the Forerunner—"the voice" crying in the wilderness. Yet more, these works of Christ will prove to the world that He is the Messiah, and confirm the witness of St. John. Even so our Lord Himself thought when He said, "I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given Me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of Me."[1]

With this in our mind we can see the fitness of our Lord's reply to the question, "Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?"

"Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them."[2] The prophet Isaiah had foretold that these works should be done by the Messiah. The news, then, that our Lord was openly showing Himself as "He that should come," by a witness more convincing

[1] St. John v. 36. [2] St. Matt. xi. 4, 5.

than his own, came to St. John in prison as a great consolation.

There is only one place where the air is "pierced by no star." To St. Peter in prison came the angel of liberty; to St. Paul the inspiration to write many things for the good of the Church; to St. John the Evangelist in his exile came the vision of the Ascended Lord—the conqueror of death. Even so to the Forerunner comes the confirmation of his witness to Christ, and the joy of knowing that when he is gone his disciples will have learned already to follow the Messiah.

PASSAGES FOR READING.

(1) 1 Kings xvii. 1–7. Elijah in the desert, a type of St. John the Baptist. God often ordains a time of retirement from the world for those who are called to do some great work for Him, before they enter on the work.

(2) 1 Kings xvii. 8–17. Elijah instructs the widow how to escape the famine. St. John came to the Jewish people to warn them to flee from the wrath to come.

(3) 1 Kings xviii. 1–18. Elijah rebukes Ahab the king—a type of St. John's reproof to Herod, and of the Church withstanding the world.

(4) 1 Kings xix. Elijah learns that persecution is no sign of abandonment by God—or of failure. All that will live godly must suffer persecution in some way.

(5) St. Luke iii. 1–18. Repentance opens the eye of the understanding to see the truth—whereas sin blinds the soul.

(6) St. Mark vi. 17–29. We must when occasion demands "contend earnestly for the faith" and discipline of the Church. Herod had not moral courage to save St. John. Cowardice is more often moral than physical.

V.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

The Desire of all Nations

Prophecy

"The Desire of all nations shall come." (Hag. ii. 7.)

Jesus Christ

"Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see: For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them." (St. Luke x. 23, 24.)

The Soul

"With my soul have I desired Thee in the night." (Isa. xxvi. 9.)

V.

The Desire of all Nations

"THE Desire of all nations shall come." In these words of the prophet Haggai Jews as well as Christians see a promise of the looked-for Messiah.

As the words stand in Holy Scripture they are closely related to the description of the difference between the old Temple of Solomon and the second Temple. There were five signs of the Divine glory in the first Temple which were wanting in the second; namely, the Urim and Thummim, by which the high priest was miraculously instructed as to the will of God; the ark, whence God gave answers by an audible voice; the fire upon the altar, which came down from heaven and consumed the sacrifice; the Shechinah or visible brightness, betokening God's Presence; and lastly, the Spirit of Prophecy, with which those who were called to the prophetical office were endued.

And yet the Prophet has this message to deliver to God's people: "The Desire of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts. . . . The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts."

A strange prophecy, it might seem, to come to a people so intensely national as the Jews—a people who looked on "all nations," except their own, as outside the care of God.

The word "Desire" can "only mean this, *the* central longing of all nations; He Whom they longed for, either through the knowledge of Him spread by the Jews in their dispersion, or mutely by the aching craving of the human heart, longing for the restoration from its decay. *The earnest expectation of the creature* did not begin with the coming of Christ, nor was it limited to those who actually came to Him. *The whole creation*, St. Paul saith, *groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.* It was enslaved, and the better self longed to be free; every motion of grace in the multitudinous heart of man was a longing for its Deliverer; every weariness of what it was, every fleeting vision of what was better, every sigh from out its manifold ills, were notes of the one varied cry, 'Come and help us.' Man's heart, formed in the image of God, could not but ache to be re-formed by and for Him, though *an unknown God*, Who should re-form it.

"This longing increased as the time drew nigh when Christ should come. The Roman biographer attests the existence of this expectation, not among the Jews only, but in the East.[1] . . . The Jews, who rejected

[1] "It was an old tradition accepted throughout the East, that the masters of the world should arise in Judæa precisely at this time."—SUETONIUS, *Vesp.*, c. 4.

our Lord Whom Haggai predicted, still were convinced that the prediction must be fulfilled before the destruction of the second Temple."[1]

(i.) The Jew was separated sharply from the Gentile. The Jew desired to worship the one God, to know the one God, and be especially the people beloved of God. Religion was especially their Desire. The cry of their people was, "Oh that Thou wouldest rend the heavens, that Thou wouldest come down!"[2]

But when God "came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made Man," their eyes were holden. He did not come as they had expected, and so they "crucified the Lord of glory."[3] And now the once chosen people wander homeless over the earth. They still desire One Who shall come; but One Who coming will be their Judge. Having rejected their Messiah they have waited long looking for another. What God may have in store for His ancient people we do not know; but it would seem from prophecy, and from their strange preservation as a people apart, in spite of having no country of their own, that some great work yet remains to be done for them and by them. Whatever this may be, it will certainly include a recognition of Jesus Christ on their part as their Messiah.

The rejection of the Messiah by the Jewish people was the more strange since they had especially been

[1] *The Minor Prophets*, Dr. PUSEY.
[2] Isa. lxiv. 1. [3] 1 Cor. ii. 8.

prepared for the coming of the Desired One by types and shadows, by sacrifice and by ceremonial, and by the voice of prophets and teachers sent from God.

To the Gentile no such immediate grace was given, nevertheless God "left not Himself without witness," since in the natural order He gave them "rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."[1] God thus raised their understanding by the witness of their temporal gifts to the contemplation of His "eternal power and Godhead."[2] It was the will of God, as St. Paul taught, that the Gentiles "should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him."[3]

Dimly and mistakenly perhaps, yet not fruitlessly or blindly, did the Gentile world "feel after" the coming of the "Desire of all nations."

The eternal purpose of God in Christ Jesus was hidden from their eyes, and not from theirs only, but also from Israel, who had greater opportunity, but were more stubborn and more perverted by prejudice.

We read in the Gospel that "certain Greeks" approached Philip, the Gentile disciple, with the demand, "Sir, we would see Jesus."[4] Through their lips was expressed the longing of the world; it "would see Jesus"—He was its Desire.

[1] Acts xiv. 17.
[2] Rom. i. 20.
[3] Acts xvii. 27.
[4] St. John xii. 21.

"What kings and prophets yearned to know,
Straining their sightless eyes below,"

was the purpose of God in Christ Jesus.

As long as God remained invisible, man could learn His will only by listening to His precepts. But that did not satisfy man; he cried aloud for a god that could be seen. He pictured, in material form, a god who might represent his own ideas of deity in bodily shape. The Hindoo pictured God under the appearance of monstrous symbols of physical strength. To the Egyptian, life was the sacred symbol of God—the ibis, the bull, the crocodile, the cat, and the serpent. The mummy and the pyramid, what was their significance?

(ii.) The Greek attained a loftier ideal—the adumbration of the truth. To the Greek, neither power nor life seemed, apart from man, capable of representing the idea of God. Man, he felt, was the noblest work of God, and youth the noblest age of man. Therefore, to the Greek, all power must be human power; all beauty, human beauty; all life, human life. When he pictured God, he imagined Him as the perfection of adolescent loveliness. Hence the young Apollo, "the sun in human limbs arrayed," became the central figure of the Greek mythology. How near these men of old came to the truth! But they fell short of it. Their gods were but the idealisation of themselves. No god actually came to them from their Olympus with a message and a revelation. On the

contrary, the Greek Olympus was peopled with earth-born shapes—

> "Gods . . . .
> With forms of heavenly mould, but hearts that glow
> With human passion, melt with human woe."

It need not of course be supposed that the Greeks had any conscious thought of the deep significance of their apotheosis of the beauty of youth. It would be out of place here to discuss either this particular manifestation of the Greek genius, or its influence upon the whole intellectual, moral, and artistic life of the Greeks. The fact remains that of all the nations of antiquity the Greek was pre-eminently touched with enthusiasm for the beauty of the human form, so that the Greek conception of the gods was invariably in "the likeness of men."[1] The desire of the Greeks was for ideal beauty. This was nowhere so nearly realised as in the perfectly disciplined health of the human body in its youth or early manhood. The idea of deity naturally linked itself with this masculine comeliness. There is nothing overstrained therefore in the supposition that God Who ordereth all things fitly so used this national genius as to make it one of the means by which the Greek was prepared for the Incarnation. The Logos—the Word—"was God"; and when "the Word was made Flesh," He chose to confirm all the Greek had dreamed of, and to link the Divine nature with the human, so that the

[1] Acts xiv. 11.

Apostle could say, "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." He was indeed "the Sun in human limbs arrayed," but the Sun of Righteousness. In Jesus Christ, the Divine, under the limitations of humanity, was granted to men, in order to satisfy their need of a God in their own image and likeness. The Son of Man, all fair, beautiful among ten thousand, the perfection of loveliness, has been given to men to contemplate in childhood, boyhood, youth, and manhood.

But more, in the human lineaments of the Son of Man there shines forth the beauty of God: "For God, Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."[1] In Jesus Christ, that is to say, are mirrored not only the power, the life, and the beauty of God, but the moral image of God—the Divine perfection.

The Divine holiness was given to man to imitate, under the physical glory and beauty of the Incarnate Word. The gods of Greece could touch only one region of life in man, and that not the highest. They held man bound to the earth. They provided no remedy for the sense of imperfection, for the burden that the heart of man has at all ages experienced, which we call sin. Again, they had no message to the suffering, the sorrowful. While life was glad and gay, and the body free from pain, the gods of Greece

[1] 2 Cor. iv. 6.

seemed very gracious. But in sickness, in loss, in death, what power had they to comfort? None.

But when the "more Divine Word" spoken of by Plato came, He satisfied the needs of the whole man; He was able to rejoice with them that rejoiced, and to weep with them that wept. But it was especially to the weary, the sick, and the unhappy that He came as Comforter. To them how welcome was the new voice of tender sympathy, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."[1]

He did not destroy the ideals they had attained to; He perfected them.

Man is like an artist—he needs both materials to work with and a model to copy. He needs both moral and dogmatic truth. In our Lord he has this. Grace and truth are his in Jesus Christ, as materials out of which to fashion his life. But in the Christ he has, moreover, an absolutely perfect Model. The beauty and perfection of God are granted to him in the likeness of man.

Jesus Christ is therefore God's answer to the prayer of all nations for a God "manifest in the flesh."[2] "Oh that Thou wouldest rend the heavens, that Thou wouldest come down."[3]

But the Greek desired more than physical beauty—he sought for wisdom. Greece was the mind of the world; she became its teacher. Even the great

[1] St. Matt. xi. 28. [2] 1 Tim. iii. 16.
[3] Isa. lxiv. 1.

Christian doctrines had to rely on Greek philosophy for their scientific expression.

In this also Jesus Christ was the unknown "Wisdom of God" that they desired. The Jews required a sign, and the Greeks sought wisdom. To those Greeks and Jews who had not understood their prophets, Christ, we know, was "foolishness" and a "stumbling-block."[1] But each in turn was satisfied when his eyes were opened. Then to "both Jews and Greeks Christ" was revealed as "the power of God, and the wisdom of God."[2]

(iii.) When we turn to the Roman we find his desire was for world-wide dominion, for power and conquest.

So successful had Rome been that at the time of the Incarnation the whole civilised world lay in peace under her rule. The Greek and the Jew alike looked up to Imperial Rome as their mistress.

Greece revenged herself by forcing her conqueror to become her pupil, and out of the despised Jewish people came forth the Master of the world,[3] One Who should "rule all nations with a rod of iron."[4]

In Jesus Christ lay hidden, under the appearance of weakness, all the force and might of God. Little did the Roman judge dream when he condemned Jesus Christ and ordered His crucifixion that the mocked and insulted "King of the Jews" would one day overturn the throne of the Cæsars, and in Rome itself the

[1] 1 Cor. i 23. [2] 1 Cor. i. 24.
[3] See p. 72, note. [4] Rev. xii. 5.

Cross—the symbol of contempt—would become the sign of triumph. But so it proved. From the Cross the Crucified went forth "conquering, and to conquer."[1] He showed Himself the God of battles, and the Lord of hosts; and now for centuries past He has reigned from what was once the centre of the greatest Empire that the world has ever seen. A spiritual Empire more vast than that of old Imperial Rome has grown up out of the catacombs and dungeons. It has sprung up from the blood of countless martyrs who have been led to victory by their Crucified Lord. And all this has come about without any worldly help, or rather, it has been wrought in spite of persecution, in spite of all that the intellect and armed power of the world could do to stamp it out. "The same stone which the builders refused is become the head stone in the corner. This is the Lord's doing; and it is marvellous in our eyes."[2]

Of the triumph of Christ it might well be said that it has been accomplished "not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."[3]

And what a complete conquest it has been!

The intellect of Greece first opposed, then patronised, and finally yielded to the doctrine of the Cross; the heart of Greece found in the Son of *Man* all it had dreamed of, and more, in its search for human love and human beauty. The Jew had his desire in a fuller and final revelation of God; and the Roman found an

[1] Rev. vi. 2. [2] Ps. cxviii. 22, 23. [3] Zech. iv. 6.

empire more widespread than that of the Cæsars, combining in its unity "all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues."[1]

And the future will, we believe, but extend this triumph of the Master and perfect it. The heathen will be gathered in until everywhere the kingdoms of the world shall have become the "kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ."[2]

But our Lord is not only the Desire of the different nations of the world, but the Desire of humanity. He is "the Son of Man!" not the Son of the Jew, for in Him is neither Jew nor Gentile, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free. Humanity was the common bond of all these, and the Saviour is, therefore, the Son of Man. St. Paul tells us more. He says, "there is neither Jew nor Greek . . . there is neither male nor female."[3]

Of all nations He is the Chosen One, the Desire; and as human nature is an aggregate of the manly and feminine, so all humanity is perfectly summed up in Christ: He is the Son of Man.

The courage, wisdom, strength, and truth which we associate with the character of man are balanced in Christ with the meekness, obedience, affection, and purity which are *par excellence* the characteristics of woman.

In the temptation—alone in the desert, amid the fury of the angry crowd, and in the calm majesty of the scene in the Prætorium, we may indeed accept

[1] Rev. vii. 9. [2] Rev. xi. 15. [3] Gal. iii. 28.

the invitation, "Ecce Homo!" In His tears beside the grave of one He loved; in His tears over Jerusalem; in His tenderness for the sick, the weary, and the oppressed, we have another side of that Divine life brought before us.

Of every nation He is the Son, and of each sex the Pattern.

"The Bible personifies both sides of human nature, the masculine and the feminine, in Christ, of whom St. Paul declares in the Epistle to the Galatians, 'In Him is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female,' neither *distinctly*, for in Him both the manly and the womanly sides of character divinely meet. I say, therefore, that the Incarnation of God in Christ is the true defence against Virgin-worship."[1]

This reference to "Virgin-worship" is not altogether unneeded, or due to Protestant prejudice. A certain class of Roman Catholic writers contrast the mercy of Mary with the justice of her Son. She is represented as holding back His arm when He would blast the world with a bolt, and in the "Legend of Brother Leo" it is Mary who helps sinners up the ladder, and welcomes them into heaven, while the Saviour of the world apparently repulses them and drives them back!

This, and much more of the same kind, is nothing but the utter forgetfulness of the truth that the love, mercy, and tenderness of the Son of Man are *infinite*, while the love of any creature, even of the All-Holy

[1] *Sermons*, by F. W. ROBERTSON, second series, p. 241.

Mother of God, can be but finite. It is, therefore, the realisation that the perfections of each sex are to be found in the Son of Man that is the best antidote for any superstitious distortion of the love and veneration due to the Mother of God. He is "the one Mediator between God and man," because He alone is God and Man. He, also, is the one Man worthy of man's supreme love, because, again, He is the Son of Man, uniting the human and Divine natures in the Eternal Person of the Word, and containing in Himself every noble attribute of the entire human race, male and female.

"To every man the Man Christ Jesus puts the question, Φιλεῖς με; "*Lovest* thou Me?" Against every man who will not answer with St. Peter, Σὺ γινώσκεις ὅτι φιλῶ σε, "Thou knowest that I love Thee,"[1] St. Paul denounces a curse, "If any man love not (οὐ φιλεῖ) the Lord Jesus, let him be Anathema."[2]

We lose much of the force of the words of Scripture when we read it in the English version only.

Our Lord, in His conversation with St. Peter, uses not one word, but two, for "*Lovest* thou Me?" Twice He asks, Ἀγαπᾷς με; St. Peter answers with the word that implies a more personal, passionate affection, φιλῶ σε. The third time, however, our Lord accepts St. Peter's word, and asks φιλεῖς με;

The word φιλεῖν corresponds to the Latin word *amare*,

[1] St. John xxi. 17.
[2] 1 Cor. xvi. 22.

which is far stronger than the word "diligere," which is the equivalent of the Greek ἀγαπᾶν.

Cicero writes to one friend of the affection in which he holds another,[1] "Ut scires illum a me non *diligi* solum, verum etiam *amari*."

So that, in fact, Cicero is saying, "I do not *esteem* the man merely, but I *love* him; there is something of the *passionate warmth of affection* in the feeling with which I regard him."[2]

St. Paul, we notice, claims this passionate, affectionate love for Jesus Christ.

Not only, then, are men to esteem the Man Christ, but they are to *love* Him."[3]

"The Desire of all nations shall come." The first coming we commemorate at Christmas, and we are reminded of the strange ways in which God fulfils His promises. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." The Greeks looked upon His simple teaching as "foolishness"; the Romans put Him to a cruel death.

Nineteen centuries roll away, and we find the people of Greece and Rome numbered among the disciples of Jesus Christ—He has been recognised as their Desire. To them and to "as many as received Him" He has given "power to become the sons of God."

"The Desire of all nations shall come" again to

[1] *Ep. Fam.*, xiii. 47.
[2] TRENCH, *New. Test. Synon.*, p. 47.
[3] From my book, *The Soul Here and Hereafter*.

judge both the quick and the dead. For that second coming we now wait. Jesus Christ is still the Desire of His people. "For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry."[1]

The Church on earth prays, "Thy kingdom come"; the Church Expectant cries out, "Why is His chariot so long in coming? why tarry the wheels of His chariot?";[2] the unbelieving ask, "Where is the promise of His coming?"[3] for He seems to tarry long as men reckon time. But all the while "the coming of the Lord draweth nigh."[4] Happy are they who can say with the Psalmist, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, which I will require: even that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the fair beauty of the Lord, and to visit His temple."

He is the Desire of the soul, and He is the soul's "exceeding great reward."

"But as for me, I will behold Thy presence in righteousness: and when I awake up after Thy likeness, I shall be satisfied with it," and so shall be fulfilled the prophecy—"the Desire of all nations shall come."

PASSAGES FOR READING.

(1) 1 Kings x. 1–9. The soul will find "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." (1 Cor. ii. 9.)

[1] Heb. x. 37.
[2] Judges v. 28.
[3] 2 St. Peter iii. 4.
[4] St. James v. 8.

(2) St. Matt. xii. 42. We shall be judged according to the opportunities God has given to us. "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required." (St. Luke xii. 48.)

(3) 2 Chron. xxxiv. 3. The soul that begins to "seek after God" must strive to destroy what is evil, and foster what is good. (*v.* 8.)

(4) Isaiah lv. 6–13. In verses 12 and 13 we have God's promise to the soul that seeks Him.

(5) Isaiah lx. The coming of Christ satisfies the desire of the soul, and of all nations.

(6) Isaiah lxiv. 1–8. The cry of the world for the Incarnation.

Liturgical Notes for Christmastide

At Christmas the Church enters into what is called the Illuminative Way. The words of Isaiah, "Surge illuminare Jerusalem, quia venit lumen tuum, et gloria Domini super te orta est,"[1] ring in our ears to remind us that the imitation of Jesus Christ is "the path of the just, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." If the Psalmist could say, "The Lord is my light"—"Dominus illuminatio mea"—how much more truly can we, in whose ears sounds the gracious voice of the Master, saying, "I am the Light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness." Now it is the work of the soul in the Illuminative Way to concentrate all its efforts upon the imitation of Christ. The eye of the soul must never be taken off the great Example. Jesus Christ must be taken as our own Teacher, our own Pattern, our own Saviour. It is true He is the Saviour of all, but just now we must make the thought of our Lord very personal—with St. Paul we must say, He "loved *me*, and gave Himself for *me*"—and He asks nothing less in return than that *my* life shall be a following of His life. We must consider that Jesus Christ renews the grace peculiar to each mystery of His life in the commemoration of the mystery made in the Festivals of the Liturgical Year; and that consequently He has in store for us at this time all the graces that are appropriate to the many mysteries of His Birth and Infancy.

In the fourth century we are told by St. Augustine that Christmas Day had been kept from time immemorial in the

[1] Isa. lx. 1.

West. In the time of St. John Chrysostom it began to be observed in the East.

It is the custom in the Roman Communion for each priest to say three Masses on this day, symbolising thereby the three Births of our Lord, viz., of His Father before all worlds; of the B. V. Mary; and in the hearts of the faithful.

Office Hymns.

Vespers and Matins, *Jesu, Redemptor omnium.*

"O Christ, Redeemer of our race."—*A. and M.*, 57.

Lauds, *A solis ortus cardine.*

"From east to west, from shore to shore."—*A. and M.*, 483.

VI.

CHRISTMAS DAY

Whose Son is he?

Prophecy

"The Lord said that He would dwell in the thick darkness." (1 Kings viii. 12.)

Jesus Christ

"I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on Me should not abide in darkness." (St. John xii. 46.)

The Soul

"The Lord is my Light." (Ps. xxvii. 1.)

VI.

Whose Son is He?

IT has often been discussed whether the Incarnation would have taken place if man had not fallen. According to the belief known as the "Gospel of Creation" man's disobedience was not the occasion which led the Divine mercy and goodness to plan the taking of manhood into God. Rather it was the original design of God in creation. He had ordained that all forms of life should gather themselves together in their highest and most perfect form in man; the scale of being should, as it were, become more and more perfect as it approached rational life until it reached its climax in man made in the Image and Likeness of God Himself.

According, then, to the Gospel of Creation God designed from the beginning a union of the Divine and human natures in the Person of the Eternal Word. The fall of man did not frustrate this plan; it, however, so far altered the way in which the Incarnation was realised that it brought the element of suffering into the life of the Incarnate God. The Passion, not the

Incarnation, was the result of the fall of man from God by sin.

The idea of the Incarnation is separable from the circumstances by which it was historically surrounded. The idea may be traced to the love of God; the circumstances to the sin of man.

The question as to whether or no "Christ would have become incarnate if Adam had not sinned" was not one of early origin; it seems to have been left for the leisure of the Scholastics, and to have only become a recognised theological problem in the thirteenth century.

The majority of theologians have opposed the theory of the Gospel of Creation, and have thought that the Incarnation was not the original design of God, except, of course, in so far that the Fall was foreknown, and consequently the Incarnation was also the pre-determined remedy chosen by the goodness and mercy of God. Had there been no Fall there would have been no Incarnation.

It was with this thought in mind that an old writer of the Church speaks of the sin of Adam as a "happy fault"—*felix culpa*—because it brought about this great proof of the love of God.

The question is, however, one of little practical importance, since the Fall did mar the work of God, and did confessedly change the surrounding circumstances of the Incarnation.

We have to follow the revelation of God as it has

been given to us. Speculation as to what might have been under other circumstances than the actual ones is never a very profitable employment.

On one occasion in the course of His teaching our Lord made use of these memorable words, "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent."[1]

Man was created to know, to love, and to serve God; that is his destined end, and therefore his eternal life. But since the Fall there is no way in which man can know God except the way of revelation.

Man may know that God exists—as St. Paul argues—by the evidence of the natural world, but God in Himself is beyond the reach of man's intelligence. Any knowledge that he has attained has been given to him by what we call revelation.

By conscience, by the natural order of the world and other means, God has revealed Himself in a measure to all men.

To some He has revealed much more than to others. Throughout the Old Testament God was, by means of His servants, withdrawing the veil that hid Him from men, and making Himself known.

All the revelation contained in the Old Testament was, however, as nothing compared with the revelation God had prepared for the world in the Incarnation of His Son. Then, for the first time, God was "manifest in the flesh."[2] "No man," says St. John "hath

[1] St. John xvii. 3. [2] 1 Tim. iii. 16.

seen God at any time: the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him."[1] And how did He declare Him? By bringing God into the very midst of His creatures and as one of them. God had always been present in the world He had made, but He had never been present as He deigned to become present in the Incarnation. He had not hitherto willed to manifest Himself by linking the Creator to the creature in one Person. The Nature of God and the nature of man had been wide apart until the moment when "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" in this new mysterious life. It was never before possible for man to look upon his fellow-man and truly confess that in so doing he beheld God. Yet this was what was accomplished by the "taking of the manhood into God" through the Incarnation. St. John says that looking upon the Incarnate Word "we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."[2] Jesus Christ manifested the Heart of God, and revealed Him as a God of love. Jesus Christ is therefore the final and full and perfect revelation of Himself that God has given to man. If to know God is eternal life, then to know Jesus Christ is "the way" to this life, since it is the way to know God. We have, then, to "know" Jesus Christ. We must reverently try to learn Who Jesus Christ is before we go on to follow the steps of His holy life, and contem-

[1] St. John i. 18. [2] St. John i. 14.

plate the great work of our salvation that He has accomplished. Who is Jesus Christ? The question is simple; the answer mysterious. The question more than once was addressed to our Lord by those who desired to know Him, "Who art Thou?" "Whom makest Thou Thyself?"[1] "What sayest Thou of Thyself?" We know, too, that our Lord asked of His Apostles, "Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?"[2] Our Lord desired that men should study the mystery of His Personality, for only by the knowledge of that great "mystery of godliness" could they rightly understand the lessons He had come to teach, the truths He had come to proclaim, and the work He had come to do. We must, then, consider this mystery that lay hid (as the Apostle says) from the foundation of the world; the mystery that perhaps was, in some measure, revealed to the angels in the beginning; which was hinted at in the earthly Paradise immediately after the fall of man; the mystery which was foreshadowed in all the figures of the old ceremonial law of Moses, proclaimed by Prophets, and finally announced by the Angel sent from God to the Virgin of Nazareth. When, then, we ask, Who is Jesus Christ? the answer may be fitly given in the words of the Athanasian Creed, "We believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and man." In other words, the mystery of our Lord's Being is in the fact that He has two distinct

[1] St. John viii. 53. [2] St. Matt. xvi. 13.

natures in one Person—the nature, that is, of God "begotten before all worlds," and the nature of man taken in time from the Blessed Virgin Mary His Mother. He is "perfect God," of one substance with the Father, so that He could say, "I and My Father are one";[1] or again, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."[2] From this fact that the Divine Nature of Jesus Christ is of "one substance with the Father," we pass to the truth that our Lord is co-eternal with the Father. He is begotten "before all worlds," "the only begotten Son of God," "God of (*from*) God, Light of (*from*) Light, Very God of (*from*) very God, Begotten, not made." Or, to express the same truths in the language of St. John, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God";[3] or, in the words of Jesus Christ Himself, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am."[4]

Being thus of one substance with the Father, and co-eternal, He is also co-equal with the Father—"equal to the Father, as touching His Godhead." This follows from His unity of substance with the Father; it is implied in our Lord's declaration "that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father."[5]

There is, however, in Jesus Christ, not only the Divine, but also the human nature—He is "perfect Man," as well as "perfect God." He is "Man, of the

[1] St. John x. 30. [2] St. John xiv. 9. [3] St. John i. 2.
[4] St. John viii. 58. [5] St. John v. 23.

substance of His Mother, born in the world . . . of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting." The truth and perfection of His human nature is as important a part of the doctrine of the Incarnation as the fact of His Divinity. This humanity our Lord took from His Mother. He was "made very man of the substance of the Virgin Mary His Mother."[1] St. Paul, wishing to make this clear, wrote to the Galatians that "when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman."[2] Jesus Christ is then Divine—the Son of God; He is also human—the Son of Mary.

Nevertheless, it is heresy to think of our Lord as if He were two *Persons*, one Divine and one human—He has but one Person[3]—He is but one Christ. All this is declared in the Creeds when we confess our faith in Jesus Christ—"Who, although He be God and Man, yet He is not two, but one Christ." This union of the Divine and human natures in Jesus Christ is to be an eternal union. In Him "two whole and perfect Natures, that is to say, the Godhead and Manhood, were joined together in one Person, never to be divided, whereof is one Christ."[4] It is because the Blessed Virgin is the Mother of this "one Christ," Who is both God and Man, that she is fitly and accurately called

[1] Preface for Christmas. [2] Gal. iv. 4.

[3] This is often spoken of as the "Hypostatic union," *i.e.*, the union of Christ's human nature to the "hypostasis" or "Person" of God the Word. [4] Art. ii.

the Θεοτόκος—the God-bearer, or as we usually express it, the Mother of God.

Those who do not understand the doctrine of the Incarnation are scandalised at this title. How, they ask, can God have a Mother, since God is the First and the Last, the Creator of all?

They forget that their objection shows that they do not "know Jesus Christ," for if Mary is the Mother of Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ is God, then it logically follows that Mary may be rightly called Mother of God. This title is plainly hers, since the Prophet Isaiah foretold that "a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel,"[1] "which, being interpreted," says St. Matthew, "is, God with us."[2] Mary is, therefore, the Mother of Emmanuel—the Mother of "God with us," or incarnate. Protestants who cavil at the title—"Mother of God"—do so because they think it means Mother of the Divine Nature. But Jesus Christ took neither His Divine Nature, nor yet His human soul from the substance of Mary. His Divine Nature was from all eternity; His soul was—like every human soul—a creation of God.[3] In the case of all other men their human nature—*i.e.*, the body and soul—make up the *ego*. In Jesus Christ the human nature is complete since He has a body and soul like other men—yet sinless

[1] Isa. vii. 14. [2] St. Matt. i. 23.

[3] Creationism is the generally accepted doctrine of all Catholic theologians.

—but there is in addition to this human nature the Divine Nature also. These two natures are therefore united in the Person of the Son of God, Who, thus incarnate, is called Jesus Christ.

The fact of these two natures being united in the "one Christ" accounts not only for Mary's title, "Mother of God," but also for such an expression as that used by the Apostle when he says the Church was purchased by the blood of God.[1]

The Divine Nature has, of course, none of the attributes of a body, and consequently has no blood, but Jesus Christ being God and Man, His blood is the blood of God, His flesh is the flesh of God, His tears, the tears of God; His life, the life of God; His death, the death of God.

It is, indeed, this fact that renders the Atonement of any value. The crucifixion of an ordinary man, however good, could never have been such a sacrifice as could take away sins, merit grace, or open heaven. If Jesus Christ is not God, then there is an end of redemption.

In the Gospel record of the life of Jesus Christ we have proofs of both His Divine and human natures. As God He worked His miracles, healed the sick, and raised the dead; above all, as God He raised Himself

[1] The *communicatio idiomatum*, as it is called by theologians, is the appropriation of Divine attributes to Christ as man, and of human qualities to Christ as God, because one and the same Person is at once God and man. We can thus say "God suffered," but not "the Divine Nature suffered."

from the dead. As man He "increased in wisdom and stature"; He hungered, thirsted, was tempted, was weary; as man He wept, He suffered, and He died. But in each human act there was a Divine and quickening power. His tears have merited for us that "God shall wipe away all tears" from our eyes hereafter; His hunger has purchased for us the Bread of Life; His thirst has placed the "water of life" within the reach of all; by His stripes we are healed; by His weariness the redeemed in heaven "rest not day nor night," and yet are never weary.

Thus our Lord is revealed to us as perfect God and perfect Man. In His wonderful Conception by the Holy Ghost the corruption of original sin—transmitted through carnal generation—was cut off from Him. He was conceived without original sin. He had no earthly father. The message from God to Mary was, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that Holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."[1]

Now that all this is a great mystery none will deny. We cannot understand it, but we can, nevertheless, believe it, and we have in the unique influence of Jesus Christ upon the world for nineteen centuries a wonderful confirmation of the truth of this great fact. It is the acceptance of the Incarnation and the following of Jesus Christ that has delivered the world from

[1] St. Luke i. 35.

darkness; it is "by the mystery of Thy Holy Incarnation" we pray that our "Good Lord" will "deliver us" from sin, from eternal death, and "the blackness of darkness for ever."

The Church does not say it is needful for us to understand the Incarnation, but she does say "it is necessary to everlasting salvation that" we "*believe* rightly the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ."[1] It is necessary, because we cannot know God as we now ought to know Him except through Jesus Christ. We cannot come to the Father but by Him. We cannot live as we ought if we reject the Divine pattern of life. We cannot consciously reject Jesus Christ without moral deterioration, which, since it is the result of a guilty falling short of what we might have attained, renders us unfit for the end of our creation—the knowledge, love, and service of God. The moral perfection of Jesus Christ—His character—is bound up with the truth of His claim to be the Son of God, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity—incarnate.

Jesus Christ must either be rejected as a man Himself deluded, and a deceiver of the people, or else accepted as very God and very Man. He was "either God or else not a good man," *aut Deus aut homo non bonus*, according to the old saying.

We have now answered the question, "Who is Jesus Christ?" It remains very briefly to touch upon one of the great purposes of the Incarnation. Our Lord

[1] Athanasian Creed.

Himself said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."[1] St. Paul writes, "God sent forth His Son . . . to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."[2]

In other words, Jesus Christ "was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil, and make us the sons of God."[3]

Hitherto Israel had been especially the people of God. Henceforth all mankind were to be called into this union with the Father. Hence we pray at this time, "grant that we, being regenerate, and made Thy children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by Thy Holy Spirit."[4] God has become Man, in order that man may be reunited to God. The original gift of sonship was lost—or rather forfeited—by the Fall. It is now restored by the new life that comes to man from God through Jesus Christ—so that, "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ should all be made alive."[5] Christ is the channel of this life. He ordained that we should share this life by being incorporated into Himself. We are grafted, as it were, into the True Vine, and the life of the Vine is our life while we abide in the state of union. By Baptism we are made "members of Christ," and the Divine life is

[1] St. John x. 10.
[2] Gal. iv. 4, 5.
[3] Collect, Sixth Sunday after Epiphany.
[4] Collect, Christmas Day.
[5] 1 Cor. xv. 22.

communicated to us. By union with Christ—the Son of God—we too become the sons of God "by adoption." We are, indeed, all His children by creation, but it is "by grace" that, since the entry of sin into our being, we can realise this relationship.

By union with Christ all the forfeited blessings of creation are restored—the Divine image is stamped afresh upon the soul—and we "put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him."[1] Man is moreover restored to God's favour, since God "predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself . . . to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved. In Whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace."[2]

Lastly, the home of God is again open to us—for it is rightly sung of Jesus Christ in the *Te Deum:* "Thou didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers." Of that kingdom whose gates had been so long closed is it now written, "the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there."[3]

The Feast of the Nativity of our Lord is the Festival of the New Life. The day of our Baptism is our own birthday into the spiritual world, but if we would keep the life within us from extinction it must be fostered, nourished, sustained by fresh supplies of grace from God. We are saved, not only by "the washing of

[1] Col. iii. 10. [2] Eph. i. 5–7. [3] Rev. xxi. 25.

regeneration," but also by the "*renewing* of the Holy Ghost."[1] It is for this we pray in the Collect for Christmas Day; without this daily renewal our spiritual life will languish and die. That which food is to the body, and water to the parched soil, and oil to the lamp—that is the grace of God the Holy Ghost to the regenerate soul. In the Lord's Prayer we pray, "Give us this day our daily bread"—the Bread of Life—that nourishment which is represented by "every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."[2] To him that is athirst comes the promise, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour My Spirit upon thy seed, and My blessing upon thine offspring. And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses."[3]

The flame of love needs the oil of grace to keep it burning. Those who went to meet the Bridegroom all set out with lamps alight—but the "foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them." The light, though once bright, soon grew dull, and as it was not renewed, flickered and went out.

In order to supply the new life's needs—to foster and develop it—our Lord has left us in His Church the "means of grace"—the covenanted channels of perpetual renewal. These are, of course, chiefly prayer and the Holy Sacraments.

"They that wait upon the Lord," writes the Prophet

[1] Titus iii. 5. [2] St. Matt. iv. 4. [3] Isa. xliv. 3, 4.

Isaiah, "shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles." By prayer the heart soars up to God, and rests in His Presence. The Prophet adds, "they shall run, and not be weary." Like Elijah, in the strength of the mysterious food the soul shall go forward to the Mount of God. And Isaiah concludes, "they shall walk, and not faint." They who renew their strength shall never stand still, or cease to "go forward." The spiritual life will be to them a continual advance; "they will go from strength to strength."[1]

We owe, then, our thanksgiving to God for all His mercies—for our creation and preservation; for our own spiritual birth and constant renewal.

As "our Father," we shall strive to look up to God with love and full trust in His goodness, endeavouring to render ourselves pleasing in His sight by striving through His grace to conform ourselves to the image of His Son.

PRAYER.

"Defend, O Lord, Thy children with Thy heavenly grace, that we may continue Thine for ever; and daily increase in Thy Holy Spirit more and more until we come unto Thy everlasting kingdom."

PASSAGES FOR READING.

(1) Rev. xii. 1–9, 13, 17. It is an old belief that the Mystery of the Incarnation was revealed "in the beginning" to the Angels. They were called upon to adore the Incarnate

[1] Psa. lxxxiv. 7.

Word. Lucifer refused to humble himself before the human nature, which is a "little lower" than the angelic. He was cast out; and he tempted and deceived Eve—the first woman.

(2) Gen. iii. 13–15. The "Seed of the woman" is Jesus Christ. There is enmity between Satan and "the woman"—*i.e.*, the Blessed Virgin Mary—and between her seed (Jesus Christ and the elect) and the serpent's seed (Anti-Christ and the reprobate). Jesus Christ bruised Satan's head, *i.e.*, destroyed his power; Satan bruised Jesus Christ in the Passion, and hinders the progress of the elect. The idea is that of one stepping on the serpent's head—crushing the life out—but stung in the heel by the serpent in its wounded fury.

(3) Isaiah lx. 1–14. The glory of Christ's coming draws all men to do Him service.

(4) St. Matt. i. 18–23. "All this was done," &c. (*v.* 22.) God is very patient. Great works are often long preparing.

(5) Heb. i. 1–6. The Incarnation now accomplished is the great revelation of God Himself to the world.

(6) Heb. i. 7 to end. Compare St. John i. 1–5 with this reference to the Divine Nature of the Son of Man.

VII.

SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

The Hallowing of Home

Type

"Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; wherefore standest thou without? for I have prepared the house." (Gen. xxiv. 31.)

Jesus Christ

"Who is My mother? and who are My brethren? And He stretched forth His hand toward His disciples, and said, Behold My mother, and My brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother." (St. Matt. xii. 48-50.)

Soul

"Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits." (Ps. ciii. 2.)

VII

The Hallowing of Home

IT is a mistake to limit the influence of the Incarnation to the supernatural order. The Birth in time of the Incarnate Word has touched all that concerns human life, and has sanctified and elevated its commonest relationships. The Nativity of Jesus Christ is indeed the Birthday of God manifested in the Flesh, and as such is full of Divine grace for the souls of men. But the coming of God into immediate contact with His creatures is also no less full of human blessing. In the words of the "general thanksgiving," we owe praise and thanks to God not only for the "means of grace and for the hope of glory," but also for our "creation, preservation, and all the blessings of *this* life." That is to say, the whole life of man as it concerns the body as well as the soul is a gift of God, and a gift that has been wonderfully enriched and beautified by the Incarnation. God has humbled Himself to share our human life; and just as when He submitted to be baptised by the Forerunner He sanctified water to the mystical washing away of sin,

so when He was born He sanctified for all time the home life and the home ties of men.

Perhaps of all the words in our language there is none dearer to us than the word "home." It does not matter very much whether the home be a palace or a cottage as long as it is the place that holds all that is dearest to us on earth. It is "home"—that is enough.

Even the lower animals share with us in this affection. "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib";[1] the horse will find its way back to the stable, the bird to its nest, the wild animals to their own haunts, and the heart of man ever turns towards "home."

The emigrant, amid the beauties of a foreign land, sees in his mind's eye some bare, wind-swept cottage far away in the old country, and although he may never look on it again, he loves to speak of it as "home."

But if home is thus dear to us at all times, it seems to have a double attraction as the Christmas season draws near. The business of the great city is, for the time, at a standstill; its streets are deserted by their usual busy, toiling crowds; the railway stations are thronged with people going to all parts of the kingdom. Ask them where they are going, and the answer that sounds the most happy will come from those who can reply by that one short word, "home."

Christmas has become, even to the world, a happy Festival. Beyond all other Festivals it is associated

[1] Isa. i. 3.

very closely with the home circle—it is the Festival of home life.

But we may ask, was home always thus dear? Look back some 2,000 years, and what does history tell us of home life then? It hardly existed. What the world could give you find in abundance—wealth, learning, literature, art, and refined living were the common possession of Greece and Rome—but it needed a spirit which the world knew not to knit hearts together and make happy homes. We need no long search to find the reason for the great change that has passed over the world. The clue is to be found in the fact that home life is especially associated with Christmas—the Birthday of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Church of God, on this Festival, kneels in spirit at the cradle of the Infant Saviour, and pours out her grateful thanksgiving for the hallowing of home. One by one we are led back in spiritual pilgrimage to Bethlehem, and there in the homeless Birth of the Holy Child, in the quiet joy of the Blessed Mother, and in the watchful care of the Foster-father, St. Joseph, we are taught the value and the sanctity of human love—the beauty and holiness of a Christian home. The sacred words, "father," "mother," "child," all gain a new fragrance and a fresh pathos from the Birthday of the young Child, Whom the shepherds found with Mary His Mother on that first Christmas night.

As we kneel thus in spirit beside the manger-bed of

the Incarnate God our thoughts are very busy. We kneel there not merely as the shepherds and wise men may have knelt of old, but with a knowledge that was not theirs. We think of the after life, the death, the Resurrection, the Ascension, and the triumphant reign over Christendom of that Child during the nineteen centuries that lie between us and the event of Christmas.

If the centurion was forced by the sight of the marvel that followed the death of Jesus Christ to cry out, "Truly this Man was the Son of God," much more are we driven to the same conclusion by the history of Christendom. The Babe—unknown at Bethlehem—is now worshipped by the whole civilised world. His character and His life compel the admiration even of those who refuse to repeat the Christian Creeds.

Jesus Christ occupies to-day an absolutely unique position. Many have desired to win the place He has won, but all, yes, all have failed. There is but one Man Who is loved and worshipped; but one Whose example is a living power in the lives of millions of men at the present day. Others have founded religious systems of philosophy, and even empires, but He alone has founded upon earth a universal kingdom whose one law is the love of Himself, as the visible Image of the invisible God.

If other men could have done this they certainly would—they have failed, not because they have not tried to win men to themselves, but because God has

willed that the religion of His Son should alone, down the ages, bear the impress of Divine power, should be stamped at least by this one perpetual miraculous impress as a proof that its Founder was indeed the Son of God. "The same stone which the builders refused is become the head stone in the corner. This is the Lord's doing ; and it is marvellous in our eyes."[1] But if the Holy Child is "God of God, Light of Light, Very God of very God," then Bethlehem is not His first home. As we watch beside the manger-bed we are reminded that to hallow our homes the Eternal Word has left His own home. We must seek Him as the Church bids us (in the Gospel read at the Christ-Mass) in an eternal home—"In the beginning."

"The Cave, so dark within, and the moonlit slopes of Bethlehem outside, are not like the scenery of His everlasting home — He is the Eternal Word. Time itself, which had lived through such long periods, is younger by infinite ages than the Babe of Bethlehem. Go in thought far, far back, ages before the creation of man—the creation of the angels in all their beauty, the mysterious trial, the dreadful fall of a third of their number,[2] and Michael's battle with the rebels,[3] lie dim and remote beyond the furthest mists of human history. But the "Word," Who now by the sand-glass of man is reckoned but a few hours old, is from eternal years before that."[4] Yes, for His home

[1] Ps. cxviii. 22, 23.
[2] Rev. xii. 4.
[3] Rev. xii. 7.
[4] *Bethlehem*, F. W. FABER.

is in the Bosom of God. There, above angels and archangels, beyond the choirs which fill those halls with sweetest song, above the cherubim in depths of light and glory which far exceed even the thought of man, there in the Bosom of the Eternal Father is the home of the Eternal Son—"God of the Substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds." And why did He ever leave (if so we may speak) that home of perfect bliss? "For us men and for our salvation" the Eternal Word "came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made Man." Adam, in search of wisdom, fell from grace; man seeking for wisdom had found but its counterfeit, and so the Wisdom of the great Father of mankind is sent forth to be the Way, so long sought—the Truth, so ardently desired—and the Life, which should make life worth living.

"For us men and for our salvation" He left His home. There is a beautiful picture which represents the Eternal Word as the King of kings, rising from His sun-girt throne. His face wears a look of tender love. He takes His royal crown from His head, and an angel sorrowfully offers Him the Crown of thorns; another angel brings a reed in place of the kingly sceptre; while in the distance is seen the Cross, to which, as to a throne, He is about to go. What a change! The home in heaven left for a homeless Birth on earth — for us. There have been many wonderful pictures on this earth. The sorrows and

joys of men have brought about many pathetic events. But seldom has earth witnessed such a scene as Mary and Joseph and the Eternal Word in the streets of Bethlehem at nightfall. The sun sets on that eventful December evening on the low roofs of Bethlehem, and gleams with wan gold on the steep of its stony ridge. The stars come out one by one—the cold evening of early winter deepens into night—Mary and Joseph have striven in vain to get a lodging. Rude men are jostling God in the alleys of that oriental village, and shutting their doors in His Mother's face. Within her bosom is the Incarnate God Himself, the Maker and Judge of every passing soul. But there was no room for them—"He came unto His own, and His own received Him not."[1]

At last, weary and tired, Mary and Joseph seek the only shelter they can find—a stable, which in Eastern lands consists of a cave in the earth—and there at midnight, amid the humble oxen, the Eternal God is born, a little, helpless Child—for us. Heaven has already been exchanged for a wisp of straw in a manger—the cold wind sighs through the cavern, and the cry of a child breaks the silence of the night. Does not the shadow of the Cross and the cry of Calvary already hover round the manger?

But all creation was not so insensible to the Birthday of its Creator as the dwellers in Bethlehem. Never was earth so near to heaven as on that first Christmas

[1] St. John i. 11.

night. The adoration and love of Mary His Mother surely made some reparation for the poverty and cold of the stable?

The choirs of angels also sang aloud in the midnight heavens, while the winter night ran over with the sweetness of their strains. Every note in their music, every pulse in their melting song represented a world of supernatural acts of love, of worship, and of adoring welcome. Never had creation so gloriously gathered round its God as it did then. "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men." Scarcely is the Babe of Bethlehem "lifted up"[1] in His Mother's arms, than He begins by the burning love of His Sacred Heart to draw men unto Him. The simple shepherds in obedient faith seek their Saviour. They enter His Presence—they see the kneeling Mother and the adoring Joseph; the light of the red, dusky lantern blends with the white splendour that radiates from the little Infant; the eyes of the beasts in the shadowy background have caught the reflection—the shepherds see it all—that which is hidden from the wise and prudent[2] is revealed to their simple faith: they adore, and return "glorifying and praising God."[3]

[1] St. John xii. 32. [2] St. Matt. xi. 25.

[3] Many of these thoughts are borrowed from Faber's *Bethlehem*.

II.

"Glorifying and praising"—not the world, not success in life, or their own virtues or gifts, but "glorifying and praising *God*." It was thus the shepherds returned to their work after the visit to Bethlehem. It is in this spirit that the Church would have us keep the Festival of Christmas. It is to Jesus Christ—Whose Birthday we celebrate—that we owe our happiness at this season. What can be more unworthy than to take the gift and ignore the Giver? It is God who has given us "richly all things to enjoy."[1] But He has not only given us external gifts. He has done much more, for He has given us Himself. St. Paul argues that as God has given us the greater Gift—His Son—He will not withhold anything that we need: "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"[2]

Yes, "with Him" we may expect all other necessary blessings; but without Him, have we any right to complain if we lack much that we desire? And what is it to live "without God in the world"?[3] Is it not to ignore the claims of Jesus Christ to our love, our obedience, and our worship? Love, obedience, and worship centred around the manger-bed of Bethlehem. The love of Mary, the obedience of Joseph, and the worship of the shepherds were

[1] 1 Tim. vi. 17. [2] Rom. viii. 32. [3] Eph. ii. 12.

on the first Christmas night brought together around the Infant Saviour to typify that all home life must henceforth gather itself together about the feet of Jesus Christ in love, obedience, and worship. It was for this among other purposes that, when the ties of earthly relationship were to develop into the wider family ties of the Church of God, our Lord instituted the Eucharist. It was to perpetuate on earth His Presence—not merely as God, but also as Man. The Eucharist was to be the Sacrament of His Love, and the centre of our loving, obedient worship.

It was the Sacrament of Love, because in it Love attained its utmost limit — entire surrender to the beloved: Jesus, "having loved His own which were in the world, loved them unto the end."[1] He gave Himself for His beloved in the one sacrifice of Himself, and He commanded our love to show itself by obedience: "This do in remembrance of Me."[2] He seemed to repeat His words: "If ye love Me, keep My commandments."[3] Where He is, there is the Divine Presence to be worshipped and adored: "Behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held Him by the feet, and worshipped Him."[4] No Christmas, therefore, can be rightly kept that does not gather its brightness from that Presence in the Most Holy Sacrament by which our Divine Lord is

[1] St. John xiii. 1.
[2] St. Luke xxii. 19.
[3] St. John xiv. 15.
[4] St. Matt. xxviii. 9.

still Emmanuel—God with us. Our beautiful English title for the Nativity of Jesus Christ—"Christ-Mass"—reminds us of this truth. The Presence of Jesus Christ in the Holy Sacrament makes a home on earth for those who may otherwise be homeless. The dearest ties of earth are too soon broken, and many a one at Christmas mourns the loss of all that once made some spot to be "home." For these, the mourners, the bereaved, the fatherless children and widows, there is still a Christmas home awaiting them in the Church of God. As God, Jesus Christ is ever in our midst, but as Man also He dwells in heaven—our true home—and on earth, sacramentally, in the Most Holy Eucharist.

"From time's false dreams I flee
While Angels guide my feet,
To the sacred Altar-throne,
Where Jesus' Heart doth beat.
Softly the tapers gleam,
Around deep silence reigns,
Only with still small voice
The Holy One complains,
'Long have I waited here,
And though thou heed'st not Me,
The Heart of Mary's Son
Beats ever on for thee.'"

Where Jesus is there must be the home—the hallowed home—of the soul.

It is especially to those who "are weary and heavy laden"—who have little joy in this world, few friends, and no home, that Christmas is full of sadness *unless*

a bright faith can pierce the earth clouds and see the great realities of the invisible world.

"Blest is the hope that holds to God
In doubt and darkness still unshaken,
And sings along the heavenly road,
Sweetest when most it seems forsaken."

The spiritual pilgrimage of such a soul to the house of God will be full of thanksgiving.

The shepherds were, we may suppose, not among those who were overburdened with earthly riches and luxuries—but it is of them that it is said on the first Christmas night: "The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen."

The things that the soul hears and sees at Christmas are sufficient in themselves to fill it with the praise of God.

The invitation of the old hymn, *Adeste fideles*, rings in our ears,

"O come, all ye faithful,
Joyful and triumphant;
O come ye, O come ye, to Bethlehem;
Come and behold Him
Born, the King of angels;
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord."

We come then at Christmas to our Lord in the House of Bread (Bethlehem), and thank Him for all

the blessings of this life—for home, for parents, for friends, for all the human brightness that has perhaps made life to be happy. If we lack these human blessings, we have yet to thank Him for the gift of Himself. He was born an outcast that He might be able to feel for the lonely, the homeless, and the very poor. It is for them especially that He dwells in our midst to make a home for those who otherwise would have none. "I am with you" He seems to say, though all other friends may be far off. Jesus Christ invites us all to His Christmas Feast—it remains only for us to accept the invitation, and to refuse to let the world again shut Him out.

We come to Him not with the poor shepherds only, not with the few who "received Him" on the first Christmas night—we come not only with these, but with Mary and Joseph and the great multitude of the Saints of God. We come "with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven" to share in that praise and glory to God in which the angels and shepherds united long centuries ago. We fall down before the earthly throne of Him who is still our Emmanuel, but we lift up our hearts and join our praises to those offered by the great multitude of the redeemed who are already in the home of God, and before the heavenly Altar of the Lamb we pour out our tribute of love in obedient worship. From earth there ascends the sound of many voices uniting with the voices of heaven in "praising and glorifying

God" for His unspeakable Christmas Gift. "Glory be to God on high, and in earth peace, good will towards men. We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we worship Thee, we give thanks to Thee," because "Thou hast given us Thy only begotten Son to take our nature upon Him, and as at this time to be born of a pure Virgin," in order that "we being regenerate, and made Thy children by adoption and grace,"[1] may be all one family in Christ. We have received the "adoption of sons."[2]

This is our heritage, and this is what we should realise anew each Christmastide. These are the things we see and hear as we spiritually kneel with the shepherds beside the manger-bed of the Holy Child. With these truths in mind we go back to the work of life, filled with a song of thanksgiving. "The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen."

"Though the lowliest form doth veil Thee,
As of old in Bethlehem,
Here as there Thine angels hail Thee,
Branch and Flower of Jesse's Stem.
Alleluia! Alleluia!
We in worship join with them."

[1] Collect for Christmas Day.
[2] Epistle for Sunday after Christmas Day.

VIII.

FEAST OF THE CIRCUMCISION

The Battle Cry for a New Year

"Help us, O Lord our God; for we rest on Thee, and in Thy Name we go against this multitude." (2 Chron. xiv. 11.)

VIII.

The Battle Cry for a New Year

THE story of Asa, king of Judah, as it is told in 2 Chronicles xiv., xv., xvi., contains many lessons that might profitably be taken to heart at the beginning of a New Year.

The constant wars of his predecessors had secured peace when Asa succeeded Abijah on the throne of Judah. "Abijah slept with his fathers . . . and Asa his son reigned in his stead. In his days the land was quiet ten years."

This ten years' peace was not spent in idleness, but in the destruction of idolatry, the restoration of the true worship of God, and the building of the "fenced cities of Judah." "Asa did that which was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God: for he took away the altars of the strange gods, and the high places, and brake down the images, and cut down the groves: and commanded Judah to seek the Lord God of their fathers, and to do the law and the commandment. Also he took away out of all the cities of Judah the high places and the images: and the kingdom was quiet before him. And he built fenced cities in

Judah: for the land had rest, and he had no war in those years; because the Lord had given him rest. Therefore he said unto Judah, Let us build these cities, and make about them walls, and towers, gates, and bars, while the land is yet before us; because we have sought the Lord our God, we have sought Him, and He hath given us rest on every side. So they built and prospered."[1] Nor did the long season when there was "no war" render Asa forgetful that war might break out at any time, and consequently it behoved him to be prepared. We read that "Asa had an army of men that bare targets and spears, out of Judah three hundred thousand; and out of Benjamin, that bare shields and drew bows, two hundred and fourscore thousand: all these were mighty men of valour."[2]

In this provision for defence in case of war being forced upon him Asa acted very wisely, for hardly had he succeeded in establishing his kingdom, and returned thanks to God because of the rest which had been given to Judah "on every side," than we read, "There came out against them Zerah the Ethiopian with an host of a thousand thousand, and three hundred chariots; and came unto Mareshah. Then Asa went out against him, and they set the battle in array in the valley of Zephathah at Mareshah. And Asa cried unto the Lord his God, and said, Lord, it is nothing with Thee to help, whether with many,

[1] 2 Chron. xiv. 2–7. [2] 2 Chron. xiv. 8.

or with them that have no power: help us, O Lord our God; for we rest on Thee, and in Thy Name we go against this multitude. O Lord, Thou art our God; let not man prevail against Thee. So the Lord smote the Ethiopians before Asa, and before Judah; and the Ethiopians fled."[1]

Without going further into the story of Asa we shall find in what we have already read the lesson we need for the Festival of the Circumcision, coming as it does at the outset of another year, and connected as it is with the giving to the Incarnate God of the Holy Name of Jesus. "Lord, it is nothing with Thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O Lord our God; for we rest on Thee, and *in Thy Name* we go against this multitude. O Lord, Thou art our God; let not man prevail against Thee."

It is worth while, in passing, to notice the value of these landmarks in the progress of time, for they are not merely the result of human choice, but in a measure they belong to the ordering of God Himself. It is true that the exact day or month from which the world dates its progress in time—its New Year—is a matter liable to change; but the coming of day and of night, the course of the days which make up the week and the month, these things result rather from the plan of God in creation than from any device of man; "He appointed the moon for certain seasons:

[1] 2 Chron. xiv. 9–12.

and the sun knoweth his going down."[1] The promise is recorded very early in the world's story: "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease."[2]

It is easy to see that this plan is for the temporal welfare of mankind; but it is also for the soul an arrangement full of Divine consideration for our spiritual weakness.

Frequently it is a source of discouragement to those who are trying to lead a spiritual life, to think of the long series of years in which it *may* be necessary to plod on in the somewhat monotonous path that is mapped out for the soul on its way to God. There are times of "peace" when the spiritual life becomes very wearisome, and it seems almost too much to persevere in prayer, in meditation, in daily self-restraint. And yet if we could only let the constantly recurring fact of day and night teach us its lesson, this difficulty would, in a great measure, disappear. It was ordained for Israel of old that "the people shall go out and gather the portion of a day in his day,"[3] and the promise that has been given to the children of God is, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be."[4]

It was doubtless with a view to this, and to our spiritual as well as our physical frailty, that God graciously appointed the changes of time—day and

[1] Ps. civ. 19.
[2] Gen. viii. 22.
[3] Exod. xvi. 4. See margin.
[4] Deut. xxxiii. 25.

night, summer and winter, weeks, and months, and years.

If time had been given to man in one, long, unbroken day it would have exhausted him, unless he, too, had been constituted differently.

The changes of day and night, on the other hand, constantly serve to recruit his physical strength, and renew his more spiritual energies. "Heaviness may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning"[1] —not always, but still often it is so. The gloomy thoughts that haunted us, perhaps, when we lay down to rest, are dispersed when the morning light returns; we see things less darkly in more senses than one.

Give a child a whole book to learn by heart, and he will be overwhelmed with the apparent hopelessness of the task; on the other hand, he will experience no such despair if a short portion of the book is all that he is given to learn day by day.

So it would have been with men, if the lessons of life had not been broken up into portions by the alternation of light and darkness. We have to renew our strength day by day, and the strength we may need to-morrow must be sought to-morrow; the burden that may fall upon us next year must not be anticipated before its time. We shall find when it comes—if it comes at all—that the strength is given to bear it; whereas the anticipations of what may never befall us weigh heavily on the soul, and find

[1] Ps. xxx. 5.

no proportionate strength or grace, since the burden and the power to bear it are each providentially arranged to come together; and if we, by our own choice, fill the day with anticipated trials that in no way belong to it, we cannot force God to co-operate in our wilfulness, and bestow His grace according to our own perversely-chosen needs. Each day is, as it were, a short, complete life.

> "Lord, for to-morrow and its needs
> I do not pray:
> Keep me, my God, from stain of sin
> Just for to-day."

So, no doubt, it should be, and yet day follows day so closely, week seems to glide imperceptibly into week, month into month, so that we scarcely realise the opportunity for fresh beginning in these shorter periods of time.

To meet this not unnatural feeling we have the beginning of a New Year to help us to fresh strength. It is so far at least a marked moment in life, that all secular, and to a great extent religious, exterior life is influenced by the passing of one year into the next. The year marks more conspicuously than any lesser division of time our progress towards the end of life. It is the tritest of truisms to say that life is uncertain, but although throughout life we are in the midst of death, and we have no certainty of any, even the briefest, future, yet as time goes on and year follows

year, we *know* that death cannot be far away. "The days of our age are threescore years and ten; and though men be so strong that they come to fourscore years, yet is their strength then but labour and sorrow; so soon passeth it away, and we are gone."[1]

Just as in one sense the future is not to weigh upon us—we are to wait till it becomes the present, and in coming brings its own strength—so too the past is in a certain sense also not our concern.

There is a sense in which "sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof,"[2] and in which it is wrong to anticipate the future which may never be ours. But there is a deep spiritual lesson to be learned also from St. Paul's memorable words about the past, when he speaks of "forgetting those things which are behind."[3] It is a solemn thought that the past is unalterable—we cannot change it. The good we have done, our kind words, our unselfish actions, our prayers, are all beyond the reach of change. They are so many voices calling out to us to continue in well doing, to use well the "now" of our accepted time, the present day of our salvation. But they are more than voices calling out of the past to *us;* they are appeals still ascending to God for our final perseverance—of them it may be said by the recording Angel: "Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God."[4] Our good deeds are past in one sense, but they are not forgotten by God.

[1] Ps. xc. 10.
[2] St. Matt. vi. 34.
[3] Phil. iii. 13.
[4] Acts x. 4.

On the other hand, the opportunities we have neglected, the work we have left undone that we ought to have done, the privileges we have let go by unheeded, these can never return to us; they are gone—for ever.

Our sins too, in a sense, are gone—they cannot be undone, though they may be forgiven. Their consequences may be enduring, and extend far into the future—but nevertheless the past *is* past, and we shall never meet it again until in the presence of our Judge the record of life is spread out before our sight—"our work!"

But if it is unquestionably true that the past and the future in one sense are not our concern, it is equally a truth beyond dispute that, looked at from another point of view, the past must not be forgotten, and the future must be prudently anticipated by a right use of the present time. The story of Asa furnishes exactly the lesson we need to learn with regard to these two periods of time—the past and the future.

Asa could not undo the idolatry of the past, but he could use the present day to "cut down the groves," to take away "the altars of the strange gods and the high places," and to break down "the images," which in the past had been set up.

Even so we shall do no good in sitting down and lamenting vaguely the "things which are behind"—the sins, the negligences, and the ignorances of past years; but we shall do well to recognise that past evil has not left the present day of life without its

"images." The idols of the heart—the occasions of sin, the habits formed in the past and abiding in the present—these relics of the days that are gone we must not forget. We must, like Asa, "take away the altars of the strange gods," who have reigned in our hearts, break down their images, and cut down the groves. We have to "destroy the works of the devil."[1]

But this is not all: we have to restore the Image of the true God in our soul. It is written of Asa that after the destruction of the relics of past idolatry he "commanded Judah to seek the Lord God of their fathers, and to do the law and the commandment."

Even so we have to take care that when we have removed the idols of the heart we do not leave the soul "empty," as well as "swept and garnished."[2] If we forsake "the strange gods" it must be only that we may seek the Lord God of our fathers.

If Asa had said to himself, "The past idolatry is too deeply rooted for me to hope to overthrow it; its emblems are everywhere; they are too numerous to be destroyed; I regret the past, but it is too late now to alter"—if he had said or thought this, he would certainly have been very wrong. He forgot the past, only in so far as to refuse to be discouraged by it from a right use of the present. In this sense we ought to forget our sins.

There is, however, a sort of temperament which,

[1] 1 St. John iii. 8. [2] St. Matt. xii. 44.

when allowed, is fatal to progress. It is that remorseful, repining temper which looks back at the past, sees its many sins, its frequent failures, its broken resolutions, its apparently wrecked hopes, and says to itself: "It is no use trying again; it is too late now, too late to overcome these evil habits, too late to acquire this or that virtue, or practise self-control; it is all no use. I have failed in the past; I have no hope for the future; it must end in disaster like the past."

It is this memory of the past which is harmful, which St. Paul would have us forget, which hinders any profitable use of the present time. Quite possibly we *have* failed miserably in the past; we may in looking back see the Divine Image in the soul overthrown, and idols without number erected in its stead. A very grove of evil-looking trees may have sprung up around our idol and hidden us from the light of God's face. Our past may have been injured or weakened by this or that mistake or sin, but if we are wise we shall endeavour to forget this, and refuse to allow this memory to cramp and hinder our use of the time which still remains.

While fully recognising that the past has multiplied its evil tokens in our midst; that it has set up evil habits, evil ideals, evil desires, like idols in our heart; yet we still have opportunity to restore, by the grace of God, and the help of His Divine Spirit, that Holy Image, in Whose likeness we were made. As we restore this Divine Image the idols are necessarily overthrown,

for God is a jealous God, and will not consent to dwell in a Pantheon.

But Asa did not only consider the past—he had a care also for the future; although by no means wasting the present by gloomy anticipations of evil to come, he yet prudently used the time of peace so well, that when war came upon him unsought his enemies found him fully prepared for battle. In this sense the future was his care, not so much *as the future*, but rather that by doing his duty in the present he was unwittingly providing for whatever might befall him in the time to come. So in the time of peace, it is told us, that Asa "built fenced cities." It is by building up ourselves in our most holy faith that we best prepare for whatever may be in store for us. The standing army of the soul is composed of the virtues and graces that are given it by God for its defence against "all the power of the enemy."[1] Asa's "men that bare targets and spears" are spiritually represented by the "shield of faith" and the "sword of the Spirit."

When, then, we enter upon a New Year we go out to battle. Trials and temptations will come upon us as the Ethiopian came down upon the men of Judah "with an host of a thousand thousand and three hundred chariots." Our warfare is "not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world."[2] The Ethiopian cannot change his skin;[3] even so the powers of dark-

[1] St. Luke x. 19. [2] Eph. vi. 12. [3] Jer. xiii. 23.

ness cannot come against us except for an evil purpose. We do not, dare not, underrate their formidable numbers, but, like Asa, we go out to battle assured of success if, like Asa, we trust not in flesh and blood—not in our own might or our own resolution, but in the strength and power of God, and in the Almighty, victorious Name of the Lord of hosts, the God of battles, the King of kings and Lord of lords—Christ Jesus.

"Asa cried unto the Lord his God, and said, Lord, it is nothing with Thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O Lord our God; for we rest on Thee, and in Thy Name we go against this multitude. O Lord, Thou art our God; let not man prevail against Thee." It has been most truly said that "life, like war, is a series of mistakes, and he is not always the best Christian, or the best General, who makes the fewest mistakes; but he is the best who wins the most splendid victories by the retrieval of mistakes. Forget mistakes, organise victory out of failure."[1] In the last moments of the old year many a soul looked up to the great Captain of our salvation—to Him who by a victorious Passion overcame death, and is alive for evermore—and prayed to Him in some such words as those of Asa: "Help us, O Lord our God; for we rest on Thee, and in Thy Name we go against 'all the hosts of evil that may attack us in the coming year.'"

The Psalmist's words are often on our lips: "Our help is in the Name of the Lord"—the Name that

[1] Robertson's Sermons.

is above every name, "let not man prevail against Thee." It is this union with Jesus Christ that is our safety. If the attack is only made on us, as found in Him, we are secure. If we fight apart from Him, in our own name and in our own strength, we shall fail. At the best we shall but cast out evil "by Beelzebub"[1] —in other words, we shall displace one idol by setting up another. In this way men overcome some fault that humiliates them by pride; there is no conquest of evil, but merely an exchange of sins.

There is a danger, however, of quite an opposite kind to the one we have been dwelling upon. If some souls are discouraged by the past, there are others who are so blind to their faults as to be unconscious of anything to regret or reform. If they have failed in the spiritual life they are quite unconscious of it—or else they lay the blame on anyone or anything rather than take it to themselves. If they speak habitually with sharpness or unkindness it is because others are so provoking, and their faults stand so evidently in need of rebuke.

If they are proud, or touchy, it is not in their case pride, but "right feeling" and the duty of keeping others in their right place that leads them to appear so—it is only in appearance. If people in general find their society irksome, then the fault is of course in those who find it so; and though the complaint be very nearly unanimous, it never suggests to such

[1] St. Matt. xii. 24.

persons that *they* are to blame; no, they are right, and their "cross" is that nobody seems to see this, and therefore they are always "misunderstood." To such a soul the pagan oracle, as well as the Word of God, has a message—"know thyself"; and for such a one there can be no "happy New Year" in a spiritual sense until self-knowledge has shown it the evil *within*, as well as the evil without—in others.

"Help us, O Lord our God, for we rest on Thee." Rest seems opposed to war—but it is not altogether so. The "peace" our Lord came to bestow was not the peace of the world—not mere tranquillity and freedom from worry and trial, but an inner "peace," a rest in God which is the gift of the Holy Ghost.

This Divine "peace" is in the agreement of the soul with God, in the harmony that exists between the human will and the Divine. It is begun here and perfected hereafter, when in the resurrection we awake altogether after His likeness. Now this Divine peace is only acquired by warfare—because it consists in the entire conformity of the soul to God.

This can only be obtained by the overthrow of evil, the conquest of temptation—in other words, by fighting the good fight of faith. Hence our rest in God is not incompatible with warfare. The hope of victory, however, lies in the Name under which we fight. It is "in Thy Name we go against this multitude."

It was at the font that we were called by His Name, and enrolled under His standard when we were signed

with the sign of the Cross, in token that we should manfully fight under His banner.

Surely in the New Year, if we renew our allegiance to Him Who "goes forth conquering, and to conquer,"[1] Whose Name of Jesus was, as on this day, given to Him, we shall be "more than conquerors."[2]

Asa called upon God, and went against the foe in His Name, and we read that "the Ethiopians fled" and were overthrown and destroyed.

And so the New Year, opening as it does under the Patronage of the all-powerful Name of Jesus, fills us with confidence and hope.

The Holy Name is, as on the day of the Circumcision, given in connection with suffering. If we would conquer in that Name we too must surely suffer. Humility and obedience are the atmosphere of the Feast we are keeping, and these virtues go hand in hand with pain. Old habits, old temptations, old sins, will pursue us as the Egyptians of old pursued the Israelites when they came out of Egypt. Let us "go forward,"[3] however, and trust in God. It shall yet be said to us as to Israel: "Fear ye not . . . the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more for ever." But we must not expect to hear these words until we make our Exodus, and set our face towards the Promised Land.

[1] Rev. vi. 2. [2] Rom. viii. 37. [3] Exod. xiv. 15.

PASSAGES FOR READING.

(1) 2 Chron. xv. 1–16. "The Lord is with you, while ye be with Him" (*v.* 2) reminds us that if we are forsaken by God it is our own act. He does not leave us, it is we who leave Him. Let us seek the Lord God with all our heart and all our soul. (*v.* 12.)

(2) 2 Chron. xv. 16–19. We must as far as possible hinder others from doing evil.

(3) 2 Chron. xvi. 1–6. Asa did wrongly in trusting to the Syrians for help instead of as formerly placing all his trust in God. We must beware of alliance with the flesh, or surrender of principle.

(4) 2 Chron. xvi. 7–10. We need grace to take reproof humbly, instead of being angry. Asa's injustice to the prophet led him to oppress "some of the people the same time." One sin usually leads to another.

(5) 2 Chron. xvi. 11, 12. Asa, after seeking to the king of Syria for help and neglecting to trust God, seems in his illness to have forgotten that God is the Giver of health. It was not wrong to have sought to the physicians, but it was wrong that "he sought *not* to the Lord."

(6) 2 Chron. xvi. 13, 14. Asa died, and although like all the servants of God he was not without fault, yet we read, "nevertheless the heart of Asa was perfect all his days." (xv. 17.)

His judgment erred, but his heart was true to God; and He Who said, "I the Lord search the heart" (Jer. xvii. 10), for this reason accepted Asa.

Liturgical Notes for Epiphany.

"A feast kept on January 6th to commemorate the manifestation of Christ's glory (1) when the Magi adored Him; (2) in His Baptism, when the voice from heaven proclaimed Him the Son of God; (3) in the miracle of changing water into wine, when Christ began His miracles and 'manifested forth His glory.' In the fourth century the Feast of the Epiphany ranked amongst the greatest of the Church's solemnities.

"Sometimes, as appears from St. Gregory Nazianzen, the baptism only of Christ was commemorated on the Epiphany, and hence probably the Greek name for the Feast, 'the holy day of lights' (ἡ ἁγία τῶν φώτων ἡμέρα), which alludes to the illumination of baptism, and possibly to a very ancient tradition that at Christ's baptism lights appeared on the Jordan. However, the Breviary hymn for the day, composed by Prudentius in the fourth century, proves that the threefold commemoration on the Epiphany is ancient in the West. The vigil of the feast is not a fasting day, because the whole Christmas season is regarded as a prolonged feast."

(*A Catholic Dictionary*, p. 307.)

Office Hymns.

First Vespers. *Crudelis Herodes, Deum.*

"How vain the cruel Herod's fear."—*A. and M.*, 75.

Matins. Ditto (except on the Feast itself, when no hymn is sung).

Lauds. *O sola magnarum urbium.*

"Earth has many a noble city."—*A. and M.*, 76.

(On Sundays, from the Octave of the Epiphany to the 1st Sunday in Lent.)

Vespers. *Lucis creator optime.*

"Blest Creator of the light."—*A. and M.*, 38.

Matins. *Primo die, quo Trinitas.*

"On this day, the first of days."—*A. and M.*, 34.

Lauds. *Æterne rerum conditor.*

"Dread Framer of the earth and sky."

IX.

FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY

The Soul's Quest

Prophecy

"Ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart." (Jer. xxix. 13.)

Jesus Christ

"Whom seekest thou?" (St. John xx. 15.)

The Soul

"O God, Thou art my God; early will I seek Thee."
Ps. lxiii. 1.)

IX.

The Soul's Quest

THE Epiphany is the Feast of a series of manifestations of the Incarnate Word.

Of these manifestations three are mentioned in the old Latin Offices of the Church for this Day, as well as in those of the Book of Common Prayer.

The second lesson this morning tells the story of the Epiphany at our Lord's Baptism—the second lesson of Evensong is the account of the miracle at Cana. These two manifestations are spoken of in the ancient Offices in the Vesper hymn, and in the Antiphons to the *Benedictus* and *Magnificat;* but always, in all Offices ancient or modern, they merit but a passing notice, for the great event, the chief mystery of the day, is the Manifestation of Christ, not to Israel at Jordan or Cana, but to the Gentiles. Hence the Collect, Epistle, and Gospel speak of the glory of this Epiphany, and the whole Office is one of joy and thanksgiving to the Son of God for His glorious appearing.

"Jesu, tibi sit gloria,
Qui apparuisti gentibus."[1]

[1] *Jesu, to Thee be glory,*
Who hast appeared to the nations.

"Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee."[1]

And yet in the fulfilment of the grandest prophecies we are reminded of the unlikeness of the ways of God to our ways. The appearing of the Eternal Word is surrounded with nothing but the lowliest of earth's humiliations; and the "glory" which was to rise and shine upon Jerusalem and the whole world—albeit the glory of God—is yet veiled and hidden in the face of Jesus Christ as an outcast Child of a lowly Mother.

Well may He be called a hidden God, and well too may the soul *seek* for Him and learn to find Him in unlikely places.

I.

The Feast of the Epiphany finds us almost at the beginning of a New Year. We are starting on a way not hitherto trodden.

We have probably the usual mixture of joys and sorrows before us which each year brings.

We have our work to do, but before all we have (if we are worthy of the Name of Christ) to follow the wise men—to seek for Jesus Christ.

"I will seek Him Whom my soul loveth."

Among, then, the many good intentions we may have formed for the future—to work, to pray, to live

[1] Isa. lx. 1.

better—this intention of the soul in the "Song of Songs" must be ours for the New Year.

"I will seek Him Whom my soul loveth."

Not merely His service, not merely His praise, but "I will seek *Him*"—to know Him, to understand Him, His ways, His thoughts; to hear His words, enter into His motives until I can truly say it is no more I that live, but "Christ liveth in me."[1]

"I will seek Him"; and why? Has He not given Himself to me long ago? Have not I been His from the Font, if not from birth? Has He not even again and again given me His very Self in the Blessed Sacrament? Why, then, "seek Him"?

St. John, in the first chapter of his Gospel, gives the answer. Jesus Christ, he says, came unto His own; He gave Himself for them and to them; they knew Him by sight, but not by faith: "There standeth One among you, Whom ye know not."[2]

There is a knowledge that puffeth up, and a knowledge which is eternal life.

The Apostles, in spite of all they knew of their high vocation and their future mission, had not a clear vision of Jesus Christ until after Pentecost. Their eyes were holden throughout the three years, and not only on the way to Emmaus. They "*trusted* that it had been He," but so hidden from them was the true Christ that they knew not that it *was* He.

[1] Gal. ii. 20. [2] St. John i. 26.

And this arose from no unwillingness of our Lord to be known and understood.

On the contrary, the great desire of the Sacred Heart was to reveal Itself, to be understood, to be loved. The cause of the blindness was in man, not in God; and doubtless it was the evil still clinging around those who were yet among the best and holiest of men, as well as the depth of the Divine mystery of the Incarnation, which blinded their eyes. And so it is now; all Christians know Jesus Christ, but how often do we feel the imperfection of our knowledge of Him—how slight, how superficial it is! The conduct of the Magi shows us what our action should be.

When we have been initiated in the Faith, Jesus Christ is revealed to us, but in a way He is still hidden; He is, so to say, seen afar off and concealed by the haze of the distance.

The Star shines before the eyes of the Magi to tell them of the Birth of the Saviour, but not yet to show them Himself.

This first manifestation of Jesus Christ to the soul is precious, doubtless; but it is not enough.

Jesus desires to reveal Himself more fully; we must follow His guidance and seek Him by all the means in our power.

We have to imitate the Spouse of the Canticles, who having, as it were, lost sight of the Beloved, seeks Him throughout the city: "I will rise now, and

go about the city in the streets. . . . I will seek Him Whom my soul loveth."[1]

To fathom the depths of human wisdom we see students give themselves up to life-long study, and shall we not take equal pains to seek Him Whom to know is eternal life?

Following, then, the holy example of the Magi, let us set out on this New Year with this intention, "I will seek Him Whom my soul loveth." Do we ask where we shall seek Him?

(1) There are the places where the Magi sought Him—in Holy Writ, in their vocation, and in Bethlehem. We have His Word—do we find Him in it? Do we value it as an Epiphany—a manifestation of God in Christ to our own soul?

Doubtless we do, but still not sufficiently. We will, then, during this year, seek Him in His written Word, being sure that the Divine Spirit, Who opened its sacred pages of prophecy to the wise men and to the disciples on the way to Emmaus, will open our eyes also to see the wondrous things of His law; and that He, the Divine Word—the *Logos*—will Himself open our understanding, that we may understand the Scriptures.

(2) Then we may seek Him in our vocation—the "calling" in which we were called, waiting for His invitation, not thrusting ourselves in where He does not summon, and yet not hesitating when the call

[1] Song of Solomon iii. 2.

comes to any work—trying to look only to His guidance in difficulty and doubt, persevering until the Star leads us into His Presence.

We shall certainly find Jesus in our vocation, if we are faithful.

(3) Then, again, the Magi sought and found Him in Bethlehem. We know Bethlehem so well and yet so little. The Eucharist, with its ever-burning lights, is our "House of Bread."[1] Jesus is there, but how little we know of the greatness of that Mystery!

We may then seek Him this year in Bethlehem, and try and learn to know better in that Sacramental Life Him Whom we love.

But is this all? May it not be that the special revelation of Jesus Christ to which God calls us is one that we are not expecting? One not awaiting us in the familiar places where He usually meets us and all who seek Him? Surely there must have been some surprise in the minds of the Magi when they found the King Whom they sought in so mean a place, attended so poorly?

How came they to accept the revelation—to worship and to offer gifts?

It must have been because they really sought Him Whom their soul loved, because they were prepared to find the ways of God different to their own imaginations.

So, too, if we are seeking Christ as He wills to

[1] Bethlehem means "House of Bread."

reveal Himself to us, and not only under conditions which approve themselves to our fancy or prejudice, we must be prepared to find the Star lead us through strange ways, and to hover over places where it would seem unlikely to find our King.

On the other hand, we may search and search in vain in all the high places of our selection and yet not find Him at all.

The Magi sought Him in the royal palaces of Jerusalem, but He was not there. He was in the lowly dwelling-place, amid the poorest of God's world; and there they had to unload their costly offerings.

Mary Magdalene sought Him in the tomb where she had left the Sacred Body, and her tears so blinded her eyes that she could not see Him when He stood beside her in the beauty of His Resurrection; but the voice of Jesus penetrated her ear, and her heart knew Him, "for she loved much."

So if we would find our Lord we must seek Him where He is — where He calls us—and we shall find Him; if not in one place then in another; if not in high position then in that which is lowest. What matters it if it is His will, and if we find Him?

Very likely we shall seek Him first where He is not—in the empty tomb of the past—in vain remorse for sins and mistakes gone by, when He is all the while asking, "Why seek ye the living among the

dead?" and calling us to leave the dark tomb and walk in newness of life.

May we have grace to seek Him everywhere—to seek Him, and not self—and then *love* will find Him out.

"I seek for Jesus in repose
When round my heart its chambers close;
Abroad, and when I shut the door,
I long for Jesus evermore.
With Mary in the morning gloom
I seek for Jesus at the tomb;
For Him with love's most earnest cry
I seek with heart and not with eye."

"I will seek Him Whom my soul loveth."

If we seek we shall surely find. May this New Year help us to say truly—

"I found Him Whom my soul loveth. I held Him, and would not let Him go."

X.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

The Child Jesus

Prophecy

"And there shall come forth a Rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of His roots: and the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; and shall make Him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord." (Isa. xi. 1–3.)

Jesus Christ

"My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me."
(St. John vii. 16.)

The Soul

"Teach me to do the thing that pleaseth Thee; for Thou art my God." (Ps. cxliii. 10.)

X.

The Child Jesus

VERY little is told us in the Holy Gospels of the childhood of our Lord, and nothing at all of His youth beyond the fact that it was spent at Nazareth in obedience to Mary and Joseph.[1]

This silence of Holy Writ is at first sight both strange and disappointing. Strange, because we might have expected a very full account to have been given of our Lord's youth, as the pattern after which the early years of Christian life should be fashioned, since character is often decisively influenced by the ideals of early life. Disappointing, because we naturally desire to know all that could be known of the whole earthly life of the Son of Man. The fact, however, that almost the whole of the early years of Jesus Christ are passed over in silence by the inspired writers of the New Testament convinces us that there must be some very good reason for this reticence.

St. Paul, in writing to the Romans, draws their attention to the fact that "whatsoever things were

[1] St. Luke ii. 51.

written aforetime" in the Old Testament Scriptures "were written for our learning."[1] The things that were omitted from the Sacred Writings were not needful for our learning, and everywhere in Holy Writ we find no encouragement to think that God inspired men to write merely for the satisfaction of human curiosity.

We may conclude, then, that all that is needful "for our learning" has been told us about the childhood and youth of Jesus Christ. That so much is unrecorded emphasises enormously every incident, every detail that is written.

The incidents recorded of the Sacred Childhood are—the Nativity of our Lord;[2] the visit of the shepherds to His birthplace;[3] His Circumcision on the eighth day;[4] the visit of the wise men;[5] the presentation in the Temple;[6] the flight into Egypt;[7] the visit to the Temple at the age of twelve;[8] and the eighteen years' sojourn at Nazareth.[9]

Of these events two—the visit of the Magi and the visit to the Temple—are chosen by the Church for commemoration during the Epiphany season. The first event was a significant foreshadowing of the opening of the Church to the Gentiles; the second foreshadowed the office of the Divine Teacher, outwardly like others of the children of men, and yet speaking

[1] Rom. xv. 4. [2] St. Luke ii. 7. [3] St. Luke ii. 15, 16.
[4] St. Luke ii. 21. [5] St. Matt. ii. 1–12. [6] St. Luke ii. 22–38.
[7] St. Matt. ii. 13–15. [8] St. Luke ii. 42–50. [9] St. Luke ii. 51, 52.

as "never man spake,"[1] causing the whole world to wonder at His gracious words, and the Divine truths He disclosed in the language of men.

When our Lord had attained to manhood, and was engaged in the active ministry of the last three years of His earthly life, we read that at the Feast of Tabernacles He went up to Jerusalem and taught in the Temple, and that His teaching surprised the Jews: "Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the Temple, and taught. And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this Man letters, having never learned?"[2]

Our Lord Himself explained that His knowledge was not acquired by study as other men might gain it, but was a result of a deep mystery: "Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me."[3]

This visit to the Temple at the Feast of Tabernacles was certainly an Epiphany; it was a manifestation of Divine wisdom. It is not, however, the particular manifestation that the Church has chosen to associate with the Feast of the Epiphany. There might have been room for doubt whether or no at the age of thirty-two our Lord had acquired by human means the wisdom which caused the Jews to marvel. If any such doubt suggests itself to our mind, then "for our learning" the story is written of the visit

[1] St. John vii. 46. [2] St. John vii. 14, 15.
[3] St. John vii. 16.

of the Child Jesus to the Temple at the age of twelve.

Mary and Joseph, having "fulfilled the days" of their visit, set out on the return journey. The Child Jesus, however, "tarried behind in Jerusalem," and when after three days of anxious search His parents at last find Him, it is written "they found Him in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions."[1]

It is not to be wondered at that "when they saw Him, they were amazed," for to His humble parents the sight of their Boy "sitting in the midst" of the most learned men of the Jewish Church must in itself have been most astonishing. But this was not all, for instead of the doctors regarding the simple confidence of the Boy with indulgent interest or amusement, the amazed parents notice that the learned men treat Him as one of themselves, and are "astonished at His understanding and answers."[2] "And when they saw Him, they were amazed: and His Mother said unto Him, Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us? behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing. And He said unto them, How is it that ye sought Me? wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?"[3]

Our Lord reminds her of the mystery of the Incarnation, and of the fact that St. Joseph is merely His foster-father, by the words, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" It was this relation-

[1] St. Luke ii. 46. [2] St. Luke ii. 47.
[3] St. Luke ii. 48, 49.

ship with His Father that accounted for His "understanding and answers."

Years afterwards, at the Feast of Tabernacles, these words spoken by the Child Jesus may have been brought to the memory of her who "kept all these sayings in her heart," by the answer our Lord gave to those who marvelled at His teaching, "My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me."[1]

At the moment, however, neither Mary nor Joseph could in their amazed surprise fathom the meaning of His words, "they understood not the saying which He spake unto them."[2]

The record of this memorable event in the Holy Childhood concludes with these words: "And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but His Mother kept all these sayings in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man."[3]

I.

The old difficulties in connection with the subject of our Lord's knowledge have been especially prominent in modern controversy. The question, "How knoweth this Man letters?"[4] has perhaps been less the form in which the difficult subject has been proposed, than the question as to what were the limitations of His knowledge.

[1] St. John vii. 16.
[2] St. Luke ii. 50.
[3] St. Luke ii. 51, 52.
[4] St. John vii. 15.

The Church teaches (and the Holy Scriptures bear witness that the doctrine is nothing new) that Jesus Christ was and is both God and Man. The two Natures—Divine and human—were united in the Person of the Son of God.

In the words of the Creed—commonly called the Athanasian—"The right Faith is, that we believe and confess: that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man; God, of the Substance of the Father begotten before the worlds: and Man, of the Substance of His Mother, born in the world; Perfect God, and perfect Man: of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting."

Or, in the words of St. John, "In the beginning was the Word, . . . and the Word was God. . . . And the Word was made Flesh."[1]

It is evident that here we are in the presence of a great mystery—of a truth partially hidden from our understanding. Yet we are not left without proofs of the union of the two Natures in Jesus Christ.

His life, His sufferings, His death, are a witness to the reality of His human nature.

The sublime and unique loftiness of His teaching, and, above all, His influence upon the lives of men and upon the world for nineteen centuries, suggest, at the very least, a unique cause for an effect confessedly without parallel. The Church has ever maintained that the secret of the triumph of the Christian faith

[1] St. John i. 1, 14.

is to be found in the fact that Jesus Christ was true God as well as true Man.

It would require a theological treatise of great length to enter into the discussion as to the limitations imposed upon the Divine Nature by the Incarnation.[1]

An opinion (known as the "Kenotic theory") has been lately very much discussed. According to this opinion it is thought that the Eternal Word, in taking our nature, so "emptied Himself"—ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσε—as St. Paul writes,[2] as to have "stripped Himself of His Divine state and of all attributes which made it up, to exchange it for a completely human state, with all the characteristics of weakness, ignorance, sensibility to pleasure and pain, which make up our manner of life."[3]

Without attempting here to enter into a discussion of the theory, it will be well to state clearly what is usually taught as to our Lord's knowledge by Catholic theologians.

St. Thomas—who gathers together so admirably the teaching of the Holy Scriptures and of the Fathers—teaches that Christ had not merely Divine, but created knowledge (*scientia creata*). He goes on to prove that in Christ was the knowledge called "beatific," *i.e.*, that which consists in the vision of God (*quæ in Dei visione*

[1] See *The Principle of the Incarnation*, by H. C. POWELL; and *Catholic Faith and Practice*, vol. ii., c. vii., by A. G. MORTIMER, D.D.

[2] Phil. ii. 5–8.

[3] Prof. GODET, *Commentary on St. John's Gospel.*

consistit); the knowledge known as "infused"; and that which is called "acquired" or experimental knowledge.

It was in this last kind of knowledge that our Lord increased: "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man."

We have no need to incur the censure of trying to be "wise above that is written." Such questions as whether our Lord *as Man* knew all things lie outside that which is written "for our learning." What we may be sure of is this—that as the Eternal Word He possessed all knowledge, without any limitation; and as the Son of Man He could not be ignorant of anything that He professed to know—that is to say, He could not be mistaken.

In Him were hidden "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge";[1] on Him there rested "the Spirit of wisdom and understanding";[2] to Him the Spirit was given without measure.[3]

It is intruding into the hidden things of God to seek too closely as to the manner in which the Godhead and the Manhood became related in the Incarnation.

The manifestation of the Godhead was certainly usually veiled: under the form of a servant (*μορφὴ δούλου*) we are expressly told was concealed the form of God (*μορφὴ Θεοῦ*). St. Paul's words are, "Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; Who being (originally) in the form of God, counted it not

[1] Col. ii. 3. [2] Isa. xi. 2. [3] St. John iii. 34.

a prize (a thing to be grasped at) to be on an equality with God, but emptied Himself (ἑαυτον ἐκένωσε), taking the form of a servant." St. Paul does not for a moment suggest that He Who took the form of a servant ceased to be what He originally was. Indeed, he asserts that *He*, Who was "originally in the form of God," took the form of a servant. This could not have been truly said except in the sense of the Church, that the Incarnation was a "taking of the Manhood into God."

St. Paul does not say that Jesus Christ ceased to be in the form of God when He assumed the form of a servant. In taking our nature, without laying aside His own, the Eternal Word "humbled Himself"; the Creator was "found in fashion as a man."

In Jesus Christ were mysteriously united the Omniscience and Omnipotence of God with a true manhood —finite, weak, dependent.

It may not be possible to clear up every difficulty that the great mystery of the Hypostatic Union necessarily involves, but we must guard carefully the Rock upon which the Church is built—the fact that Jesus Christ, although evidently very Man, was yet also very God. We may, indeed we should, very carefully weigh what is told in Holy Scripture, seeking the exact meaning of any words used by Jesus Christ that seem to clash with the results of modern criticism. We may, of course, quite easily have accepted an interpretation of His words that is not their only explanation. What we

need is to use all the means that are within our reach for ascertaining the exact force of any argument used by our Lord. What we cannot admit (without overthrowing all faith and trust in His Word, without in fact attacking the truth of His Incarnation) is that in any statement or argument, in which we have undoubtedly our Lord's words and teaching, He has been mistaken, or ignorant of *what He professed to know*. It is quite another matter, and in no way inconsistent with the doctrine of the Incarnation, to suppose that there may have been knowledge belonging to Him as God that He did not will to bring within His human consciousness.

The "glory" that belonged to the Godhead was certainly veiled during the three-and-thirty years, but it was not absent. Now and again (as at the Transfiguration) a glimpse of it was manifested. The power that belonged to the Divine Nature was also certainly not used to save our Lord from the insults of the Passion and the suffering of death. For a moment it was in some degree felt when in Gethsemane the band of men and officers from the chief priests "went backward, and fell to the ground."[1] But the legions of angels were not summoned to fight for their Lord, for if they had been, how should the scripture have been fulfilled?[2]

Even so it may have been with the knowledge of our Lord. With St. Peter the Church confesses, "Lord,

[1] St. John xviii. 6. [2] St. Matt. xxvi. 53, 54.

Thou knowest all things";[1] and yet without inconsistency accepts her Lord's own assurance as to the day of judgment: "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father."[2]

When then we consider the manifestation of our Lord's wisdom to the doctors in the Temple, at the age of twelve, we are reminded that we have here an Epiphany of the wisdom of Him Who, being in the form of God, has humbled Himself, and is found in fashion as one of the children of men. When we read in the concluding words of the Gospel for this day, "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man," the reality of His human nature is insisted on. To perfect manhood growth is needful. St. Cyril writes thus on these words of the Gospel: "Not as if that nature, which was perfect from the beginning, received increase, but that by degrees it was manifested." In the knowledge of His human soul, as well as in the stature of His body, our Lord was capable of growth.

It still remains true, however, that we cannot hope here fully to understand the deep things of God. We shall do well never to forget the words of the great Apostle, "Now we see through a glass, darkly."

[1] St. John xxi. 17. [2] St. Mark xiii. 32.

II.

In turning our thoughts from the event, to the chief practical lesson that we may learn from the Child Jesus in this visit to His Father's House, we cannot doubt that it is meant to teach us devotion to the holy will of God. This obedience to His Father's will has been called the ruling passion of the Sacred Heart.

It was the motive which led to the coming of the Incarnate Son. "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will, O My God."[1] To-day we have the first recorded words of Jesus Christ, spoken to His parents in His Father's House—the Temple at Jerusalem, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" During His Ministry He declared that He was sustained by this one motive, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work."[2]

At another time He said, "I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me."[3] Before His death, during the Agony in the garden, this one prayer was thrice repeated, "Not My will, but Thine, be done."[4]

Here then we have a revelation of the true wisdom, an Epiphany of the "Mind of Christ."

St. Paul would have the same motive rule our own heart, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

[1] Ps. xl. 7, 8.
[2] St. John iv. 34.
[3] St. John v. 30
[4] St Luke xxii. 42.

If we examine ourselves as to the motive-power of our own life we shall too often find that it is self-will in one form or another.

It is not always easy—indeed it is often most difficult—to be sure what the will of God is; but that does not hinder the Christian from seeking to know the Divine will, and humbly endeavouring to follow it as far as he does know it.

It is needful constantly to beware of the danger of seeking our own will under the guise of the will of God. Too often we take for granted that what we wish God wills; more especially in things that concern our vocation and spiritual life.

To know the will of God in any matter we should first ask if it is a point upon which the Church has come to any decision. We shall never find that the will of God leads us to break the law of His Church any more than the moral law. Supposing that we have no guidance from the Church—that the matter we are in doubt about is a personal one—then we must turn to God in prayer. In order to do this effectually we should in the first place have recourse to the Sacraments in order to cleanse our conscience, and as far as possible disperse all mists caused by sin, and fortify ourselves by Sacramental union with Jesus Christ. In our prayers we should address ourselves especially to God the Holy Ghost—the Illuminator. We should strive to put aside all self-will and prejudice, and leave our soul entirely unbiassed in the presence of God—praying Him to

remove our doubt and to point out the right decision. "Show Thou me the way that I should walk in, for I lift up my soul unto Thee."[1] We should ask of God that we may be helped by the prayers of the Church Triumphant, and by those of our friends on earth. In addition to this we may well seek the advice of our spiritual guide, and of any friends in whose prudence we can trust.

Having in these ways sought to put aside our own will, and know the will of God, we may reasonably hope that our decision will be guided aright. All will, however, depend upon our *sincerity* in seeking to know what is the will of God.

It is only too true that some persons follow all the above directions except the putting aside of their own will. They pray and they seek advice, being all the while firmly convinced that what they themselves desire will turn out to be the will of God; thus it happens that they deceive themselves.

With the lesson of to-day's Gospel in our mind we can resolve to follow the example of our Lord, and in every time of doubt and perplexity ask, as a child of God, "What is the will of my Father?"

"I must be about My Father's business"—"I must make His will the object of my life."

[1] Ps. cxliii. 8.

I worship thee, sweet Will of God !
And all thy ways adore ;
And every day I live I seem
To love thee more and more.

Thou wert the end, the blessed rule
Of Jesu's toils and tears ;
Thou wert the passion of His Heart
Those three-and-thirty years.

And He hath breathed into my soul
A special love of thee,
A love to lose my will in His,
And by that loss be free.

I love to kiss each print where thou
Hast set thine unseen feet ;
I cannot fear thee, blessed Will !
Thine empire is so sweet.

When obstacles and trials seem
Like prison-walls to be,
I do the little I can do,
And leave the rest to thee.

He always wins who sides with God,
To him no chance is lost ;
God's Will is sweetest to him when
It triumphs at his cost.

Ill that He blesses is our good,
And unblest good is ill ;
And all is right that seems most wrong,
If it be His sweet Will ![1]

[1] Faber.

PASSAGES FOR READING.

(1) Gen. iii. The first sin was one of self-will—disobedience. For this reason the Redemption is especially brought about by obedience. He was "obedient unto death." The B.V.M. also by her obedience to the will of God undid the disobedience of Eve. "Be it unto me according to Thy word."

(2) Gen. vi. 14–22. The story of Noah building the ark in obedience is a type of the obedience of our Lord in forming the Ark of His Church out of the Wood of the Cross.

(3) Gen. xii. 1–4. Abraham's obedience is a type of the soul seeking to do the will of God at whatever cost.

(4) Gen. xxii. 1–18. The trial of Abraham's faith is also a type of the Redemption. "God spared not His own Son." Abraham's devotion to the will of God was the cause of his being "the friend of God."

(5) Exod. xxxiv. 4–17. The commandments of God and of His Church are the expression of His will. "If ye love Me, keep My commandments."

(6) 1 Kings xvii. The care of God for Elijah is but one instance of the way in which His providence watches over those who obey His will.

XI.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

The Beginning of Miracles at Cana

Type

"She communed with him of all that was in her heart, and . . . there was not anything hid from the king, which he told her not." (1 Kings x. 2, 3.)

Jesus Christ

"If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." (St. John xv. 7.)

The Soul

"In the night season did I sing of Him, and made my prayer unto the God of my life." (Ps. xlii. 10.)

XI.

The Beginning of Miracles at Cana[1]

FEW of our Lord's miracles have been interpreted in such different ways as this at Cana.

Perhaps in none other is the tone of comment more markedly distinct between the great Commentators of the early Church and those of the middle and later ages.

Our Lord has left behind Him the period of the Hidden Life—the eighteen years—of which all we know was told us in the Gospel for last Sunday: "He went down to Nazareth, and was subject" to St. Joseph and His Mother.

Now the years of active ministry are beginning, and the miracle of to-day's Gospel is the first of all the wonderful works which our Lord wrought through His Divine power.

It is no great occasion—only a marriage feast. The thirty years of perfect life have been passed in ordinary daily duties, and now the first manifestation of Divinity is at a homely wedding banquet.

It is "the third day"—the third, that is, from the day when our Lord had promised Nathanael, "Thou shalt see greater things than these."[2]

[1] St. John ii. 1–11. [2] St. John i. 50.

He had received the witness of the Father by the voice from heaven at His Baptism[1]—the public testimony of St. John Baptist to His being "mightier than" he;[2] but our Lord Himself declares, "I have greater witness than that of John, for the works . . . that I do bear witness of Me."[3]

The time for a further Epiphany has come. "Thou shalt see greater things than these"; and now the promise is to be fulfilled: "And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee."

"The third day!" The third seems to be the appointed day for the great manifestations of God.

1. In the giving of the Old Law the third day is very emphatically and repeatedly mentioned: "Sanctify them to-day and to-morrow, . . . and be ready against the third day: for the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all the people."[4]

2. Again, last Sunday we read that when "the Child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem," "after three days" they found Him in the Temple.

3. And once more, day by day in the Creed, when we think of the Resurrection—that greatest manifestation of power—we say, "the third day He rose again."

It was then on "the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the Mother of Jesus was there: and both Jesus was called, and His disciples, to the marriage."

[1] St. Matt. iii. 17.
[2] St. Matt. iii. 11.
[3] St. John v. 36.
[4] Exod. xix. 10, 11.

For some days we may suppose the feast lasted, and at some period or other the wine failed.

The want does not appear to have at first attracted attention, but the Mother of our Lord was aware of it; for "when they wanted wine, the Mother of Jesus saith unto Him, They have no wine. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come."

It may be well to remind ourselves what the words spoken by our Lord exactly are. The words in Greek mean literally, "What to Me and to thee, O woman"; and the Vulgate has kept this sense, "*quid mihi et tibi est, mulier?*"

The meaning of the words is not clear when literally translated, but the interpretation implied in our Authorised Version comes as near to the probable sense as is possible in so short a paraphrase, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?"

St. John Chrysostom, in the homily upon these words, after remarking how greatly our Lord reverenced His Mother because, as St. Luke tells us, He was subject to her, yet teaches that in these words our Lord uttered a kind of reproof. His comments show the different spirit in which our Lady was regarded in the early Church from the spirit of the Church to-day. St. John Chrysostom says: "The Blessed Virgin said 'they have no wine.' For she desired both to do a favour to the bride and bridegroom, and through her Son to render herself more conspicuous; perhaps, too,

she had some human feelings like His brethren, when they said, 'Show Thyself to the world,' desiring to gain credit from His miracles. Therefore He answered somewhat vehemently, saying, 'Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come.'"

Again, St. John Chrysostom says of the Blessed Virgin: "She, because she had borne Him, claimed according to the custom of mothers to direct Him in all things, when she ought to have reverenced and worshipped Him."

And later on in the same passage he says:—

"The request (to work the miracle) ought to have come from those who needed, not from His Mother . . . and so this was a reason why He rebuked her on that occasion, saying, 'Woman, what have I to do with thee?' instructing her for the future not to do the like."

St. John Chrysostom then asks, "Why after He had said, 'Mine hour is not yet come,' and given her a denial, did He what His Mother desired? Chiefly it was that they who opposed Him and thought that He was subject to the hour might have proof that He was not. And in the next place, He did it to honour His Mother, that He might not seem entirely to contradict and shame her that bare Him, in the presence of so many; and also that He might not be thought to want power, for she brought the servants to Him."

With this comment of St. John Chrysostom before us, we can perhaps well understand how those who hold that the Church was in some special way perfect during

the early centuries, and had in all points (and not only in the changeless dogmas of revelation) come to a perfection from which she has since fallen—entirely put aside as wrong the position which our Lady has won for herself in the Church Universal of to-day.

But they, who believe the Church to be the mystical Body of Christ, able to grow like her Lord "in wisdom and stature," can read such words unmoved, can acknowledge the holiness and the learning of St. John Chrysostom as a doctor of the Church, and yet absolutely differ from the conclusions he drew from our Lord's words. The sense of Christendom—the spirit and mind of the whole Church—has rejected his interpretation.

What, then, do the words mean?

St. Augustine seems to make them clear.

He says, "Our Lord Jesus Christ was both God and Man. In that He was God, He had not a Mother. In that He was Man, He had. He seems to say, 'Thou gavest not birth to that part of Me which works a miracle—My Divine Nature.' 'Woman, what has the nature I took of thee to do with working miracles? What do I owe to thee but works proper to the nature thou gavest? and yet thou askest of Me a work proper to that Nature which I had with My Father from all eternity.'"

This interpretation of St. Augustine is followed by Cornelius À Lapide, and the general opinion of the present day.

We see then in the words of our Lord, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" a similar intention to that which He expressed in the Temple when He said, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?"—an assertion of His Divine Nature, over which no human authority had any control. We see in it a trial of the faith of His Mother. It was our Lord's will to demand faith in those who asked for His miracles—to suggest a difficulty, and then if the faith did not fail, to grant to the full what was asked.

And to this law He would not make even His Mother an exception; she must realise what she asked, and of Whom.

We know the result; Mary's faith was perfect. The apparent rebuke she accepted, and knew what it meant. She never doubted that her petition was heard, and she turned to the servants at once with the order, "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it."

"O woman, great is thy faith!" Our Lord, if He works His first miracle before the hour is come, will yet have it known that it is drawn from Him rather by the faith of His Mother in His Divine power than by the influence of a human relationship.

He would encourage *all* in need to ask His aid, for all might have that faith which He required, though all could not claim a Mother's right. But He will not the less, surely, grant a miracle to Mary's faith, because she is His Mother?

Our Lord, then, when He says the words, "Woman,

what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come," points out that He listens to the voice that professes faith in His Divine Nature as well as to the voice of His human Mother when He works the miracle. If the miracle had only been granted to Mary as His Mother, it could not have been an encouragement to us to pray; if, however, it is granted to the faith of the petitioner, we can all learn the lesson, while the fact that in this first miracle Mary is an example of faith has also its special teaching as regards her power with God.

"Mine hour is not yet come."

There are two explanations of these words.

St. John Chrysostom thinks that our Lord intended that it was not yet the right moment for the miracle—the failing of the wine had not been sufficiently noticed—those for whom the miracle was asked had not asked for themselves, and were not yet perplexed by the failure.

If this is the meaning, all the more wonderful is the fact that our Lord anticipated "the hour" in order to comply at once with His Mother's request.

St. Augustine interprets the words differently.

He says, first of all, that astrologers tried to make out that our Lord was tied by fate—by the influence of the stars—and St. Augustine denies this to have been "the hour" referred to by our Lord.

St. Augustine says that our Lord spoke of the hour—the time—when He could fittingly acknowledge the claim

of His Mother. His words mean, "I will acknowledge thee as soon as the weakness of which thou art Mother shall hang upon the Cross," and consequently when our Lord was crucified He said, "Woman, behold thy son."

This, then, we may say, is the teaching of the early Church as regards this miracle.

We turn now to the Church of later days, and find the East (of which St. John Chrysostom was a doctor) and the West alike rejecting all idea that our Lady, either at Cana or elsewhere, did anything worthy of rebuke. She is the second Eve—the all-holy Mother of God, without sin—the dwelling-place of which it is written, "Glorious things are spoken of thee, thou City of God"; she is the "glory of Jerusalem"—the joy of Israel—"the great rejoicing of our people"; and yet more, she is "full of grace"—the Mother of the Incarnate God, and our Mother also; she is "all fair," "there is no spot" in her.

How, then, does the Church throughout all the world at this day read this miracle?

She takes it first of all as it stands—literally.

There is the marriage; the need of wine; the exquisite love of others in Mary; her observant prayer for them; and the full and immediate answer to it—the first miracle of Jesus Christ.

But mystically also, with St. Bernard, she sees the miracle as one full of mysterious teaching. The marriage is betwixt Christ and His Church; all are called to the wedding, "the marriage of the Lamb."

Love and grace are always failing; *all* may pray, but Mary is "there," with Jesus, and names our needs, and the Heart of Jesus grants her prayer.

Where St. John Chrysostom sees a rebuke and a warning "not to let it occur again," St. Bernard (and the Church with him) sees the example of Mary interceding, and the encouragement given to her, and indeed to all the faithful, to pray for others.

St. Bernard says: "I tell you, brethren, that if Mary be rightly asked she will not fail us, for she is merciful and the mother of mercy."[1]

St. Bernardine of Siena says: "There are three things in wine—brightness, sweetness, and warmth; for its colour is bright, its taste sweet, and its power strong and warming. And our tender Mother was desirous to show to her most compassionate Son, Jesus, that the world knew nothing of the brightness of His Person, the sweetness of His yoke, and the might and power of His Divinity; and she made her prayer that He would enlighten our darkened intelligence, and change into love of truth the foolishness of our affections, and give strength and vigour to our feebleness of will."

She asked Him to change the fleeting things of time into the joy of eternity—the feasts of this world to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Mary does not tell our Lord at Cana what He does not know, but she speaks as interceding. It is as if

[1] But we are *not* told that any one "asked" for Mary's intercession at Cana.

she were charged with the care of all. It is true we are not told that anyone asked the Blessed Virgin to intercede, but we learn the power of her prayer, and to trust her love.

To sum up:—

1. We learn first, then, the power of Mary's prayer; to the faith of Mary God cannot refuse what He has promised to all the faithful; to honour His Mother, though His 'hour' is not yet come, He hastens His miracle.

Will He hear her less now that the banquet is in honour of the union between Himself and the soul—Himself and the Church?

2. We learn again the power of all intercession.

If we had Mary's faith we might have her answer, though in His own time. "Lord, increase our faith; teach us to pray one for another."

3. "His Mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it."

Perhaps prayer is all He asks of us—it may be; but let us give good heed and be ready if He asks more, for the Mother of Jesus, when her petition was made, turned and gave her command, "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it."

He may ask us to co-operate with Him, to *do* as well as to pray. Be ready, but, above all, trust Him—expect His answer, and be sure, even though a miracle be needed, He will not refuse. "Work your work

betimes, and in His time He will give you your reward."[1]

He has pledged His word, not to His Mother alone (though to her, of course, pre-eminently), "Whatsoever ye shall ask in My Name, that will I do."[2]

PASSAGES FOR READING.

(1) Gen. xviii. 23–33. Abraham represents the Saints of God pleading for the fallen world. God will hearken, and, if it be possible, will grant somewhat to their intercession. "I believe in . . . the Communion of Saints."

(2) Num. xii. 1–13. The intercession of Moses for Miriam (who had opposed him) showed that he had a Christ-like spirit of forgiveness. (See St. Matt. v. 44, 45.)

(3) Num. xiv. 13–19. Ingratitude and distrust are great sins. Moses obtained forgiveness for the people, but not the withdrawal of their temporal punishment. Our intercessions should be offered for those who despise God's revelation concerning heaven, and distrust His promise of grace to overcome temptations and so to enter into rest.

(4) 2 Kings vi. 17. Elijah obtains spiritual vision for the young man. The Church prays for, and obtains, faith for her children (*e.g.*, at Baptism).

(5) 2 Chron. xxx. 18–20. Hezekiah prayed for those who had eaten the passover without due preparation. We, too, should intercede for those who come unprepared to the Christian Passover—the Holy Eucharist. (1 Cor. xi. 28–32.)

(6) Ezek. ix. 8–10. This intercession of Ezekiel for his people teaches us that even the Saints of God cannot obtain graces for those who themselves obstinately turn from God.

[1] Ecclus. li. 30. [2] St. John xiv. 13.

XII.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Faith in God

Type

"He was intreated of them; because they put their trust in Him." (1 Chron. v. 20.)

Jesus Christ

"Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith." (St. Mark xi. 22, 23.)

The Soul

"They that know Thy Name will put their trust in Thee; for Thou, Lord, hast never failed them that seek Thee." (Ps. ix. 10.)

XII.

Faith in God

THE Church has chosen some miracles of healing for the Gospel on the Third Sunday after Epiphany, because they bring before us a further manifestation of our Lord's Divine Nature.

It seems almost as if we had before us an ascending scale of such manifestations, leading upwards from the lowly one of our Blessed Lord in His Mother's arms on the Feast of the Epiphany itself, to a throwing aside at His Baptism of some of the veils which hid His glory, until in the Transfiguration through the Sacred Humanity of the Son of Mary there forces its way some of the Divine power and majesty, which is finally revealed to us in that Epiphany of the Ascended Lord when He manifested Himself as "the First and the Last"—"the Almighty."[1]

Thus it was that on the first Sunday after Epiphany a glimpse of the Divine Wisdom was shown to us; and the motive power of the Incarnation—obedience to the Divine will—was disclosed in the words, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?"

[1] Rev. i. 8, 17.

Last Sunday we had our thoughts turned to the power of Christ over the inanimate world which He had created. St. John writes, "All things were made by Him."[1] Our Lord wills that we should not only know this, but that we should also learn that by Him all things are re-created and raised to a higher state.

The creature of water lay there at Cana as He made it, subject to His will, having no power to resist the fiat which changed it into wine any more than when of old God "moved upon the face of the waters"[2] it could resist the fiat which caused the light to shine upon its darkness.

But to-day we rise a degree higher; we see in type the very picture of what God set Himself to do at His Incarnation. He was manifested "that He might destroy the works of the devil";[3] and so, for the first time, the work of restoration is now wrought in man —made in the image of God, but fallen by disobedience from the perfection of his first state.

The miracles recorded in to-day's Gospel are surely works more mighty, and, if we may use such language, more difficult of performance, than the miracle at Cana; more mighty, because they were worked upon man; more difficult, because in the leper and the centurion there was that strange, mysterious power of free-will that could thwart, to some extent, the Divine power itself—which, indeed, had originally done so. The rebel will of man had worked that hideous

[1] St. John i. 3. [2] Gen. i. 2. [3] St. John iii. 8.

ruin which now, personified in the leper, knelt before the Second Adam and prayed for succour.[1] In the story of the healing of the centurion's servant there are many points on which we might dwell; but there is one point about which our Lord Himself has spoken as being supremely important—his faith. It is recorded that when our Lord heard the centurion's words, "He marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."[2]

In the case of the leper we see the faith that seeks the help of our Lord for its own needs. It moves the Sacred Heart of Jesus to pity, and draws from Him miraculous power.

In the second example the power of faith is still more fully brought out, for here it is not the sick man himself whose faith is rewarded, but it is the faith of his master, the centurion: "There came unto Him a centurion, beseeching Him, and saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented." The miracle of healing, asked for his servant, is granted by our Lord in answer to the centurion's faith. "Jesus said . . . Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the self-same hour."

We may therefore take this "faith," which our Lord commends, as the point for consideration in these miracles.

[1] St. Matt. viii. 2. [2] St. Matt. viii. 10.

The word faith is used in the Sacred Scriptures in two distinct senses.

It stands sometimes for the truths of revelation and belief in them—as when it is said, "Faith cometh by hearing";[1] or as when we are exhorted to contend earnestly "for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."[2]

But more often the word faith is used for "trust," or confident reliance upon God. In this sense our Lord said to one, "Thy faith hath made thee whole";[3] and it was this strong confidence in His power to heal, expressed by the centurion, that led our Lord to declare, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."

From Holy Scripture, therefore, it is clear that faith is not only belief, but also the confidence or trust that belief begets. Faith is belief leading to trust, to absolute confidence, and action based upon such belief. The centurion, however imperfectly he may have understood the mystery of Christ's Being, and the dogma of the Incarnation, yet in some very real sense believed in Christ—believed in His personal power and goodness; and this belief, this dogmatic faith, led to that other faith or trust in Him on Whom he believed, which brought him to Christ. The centurion intuitively passed from intellectual to actual faith in Jesus Christ. Like St. Paul, he might have said, "I know Whom I have believed,"[4] and "this know-

[1] Rom. x. 17. [2] St. Jude 3. [3] St. Matt. ix. 22. [4] 2 Tim. i. 12.

ledge convinces me that I can place my trust in Him."

Here we see the supreme importance of faith, namely, that if it be real it must influence our life, our actions, and thoughts; and our actions and thoughts in turn form our character for good or for evil. And yet sometimes have we not felt (when, perhaps, off our guard) the influence of that query, so popular to-day: Does it matter much what we believe, if only our life "make for righteousness," as Matthew Arnold expressed it? We have, perhaps, questioned the wisdom of insisting too much on dogma, as of little value compared with action. And yet has not the loftiest character taught the value of dogma in the words, "This is life eternal, to *know* Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent."[1] Not of course that the bare dogmatic knowledge of Jesus Christ is eternal life, but that to know Him is essential because the tastes, the character, and the mind that shall be fit for "eternal life" must have been moulded by that knowledge, and led along the paths of this world by Him Who alone is the Way, as well as the Truth and the Life.

This dogmatic faith, then, is of vital importance, because each part of it is designed to instruct us in some one or other point which tends to lead back our will and affections to their centre—"the only true God." "If we intended to leave this country and make our

[1] St. John xvii. 3.

future home in a distant foreign land, we should naturally learn beforehand all we could about its climate, its productions, its inhabitants, and sovereign—their language, laws, customs, character.

"But if, through our own folly or carelessness, our information on all these points was false; if the language differed from that which we had learned, and the laws, customs, character of sovereign and people, as well as the climate and productions of the country, were quite contrary to what we had expected—do we not see that we should arrive in our future home very badly equipped for the enjoyment of it?"[1] Our mistaken belief would have so influenced our actions as to have made them all of little or no use for the purpose we had in view.

Now it is just here that faith in our Lord is of vital importance. If, on the death of the body, "man goeth to his long home";[2] if it be true that "the dust shall return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God Who gave it"[3]—then how important it is that the soul should find its home in God a congenial resting-place; and how can this be if God be an unknown God?

That we may know "the only true God" we must know Jesus Christ Whom He hath sent, for "He hath declared Him,"[4] and except by Him "no man cometh unto the Father."

[1] *Mission Sermons*, W. BUXTON.
[2] Eccles. xii. 5.
[3] Eccles. xii. 7.
[4] St. John i. 18.

Is not this just what we mean by Christianity? For is not Christianity faith in Jesus Christ—unreserved self-committal to Him, based upon the belief that faith in Jesus Christ is faith in God, and union with Jesus Christ is union with God? And yet who has not met with those (so numerous in the present day) who would separate between the dogmatic faith as to our Lord's Being—as to the Incarnation—and the character of our Lord? Such people ask, What does it matter if Jesus Christ be God, or merely an inspired man, if only we accept His teaching in so far as it tells upon our actions?

But the distinction that is thus attempted to be made is impossible—it cannot stand.

If we go at all thoughtfully into the question we soon come to the old dilemma expressed by the words, "aut Deus, aut homo non bonus"—"Jesus Christ is either God, or else not a good man." Our Lord claimed too much unless He was what He claimed to be. He was either "the Way, the Truth, and the Life"[1]—"the Resurrection and the Life"[2]—the "only-Begotten of the Father";[3] or else the verdict of the hostile Jews was true when they said, "He deceiveth the people."[4]

The only basis for the imitation of Christ is acceptance of the truth of the Incarnation.

The belief of Christendom has been the same from the beginning—that our Lord Jesus Christ was, and

[1] St. John xiv. 6.
[2] St. John xi. 25.
[3] St. John i. 14.
[4] St. John vii. 12.

is, "God of God," equal to the Eternal Father as touching His Godhead, though inferior as touching His Manhood.

If the Gospel record is false in ascribing miraculous power to Jesus Christ, it is equally false, perhaps, in its description of His teaching and character.

If Jesus Christ is not God, then Christianity is a lie, and the world has been regenerated by a lie. Beelzebub has cast out devils; falsehood has made known truth; and the loftiest morality and most sublime teaching ever given to man is the fabrication of hysterical fanatics and wilful impostors!

The mariners of old needed considerable skill lest, while avoiding Scylla, they should be wrecked on Charybdis; and truly they who would avoid the miraculous have rocks ahead in dealing with the phenomena of Christianity.

We are reminded then of a great and all-important fact, namely, that the dogmatic faith as to the Person of Jesus Christ is a first condition for us, in order that we may have that faith and trust in Him, which He requires before He heals us.

This trust rests upon His Divine and human Natures, united in the Person of God the Son, as a fortress built upon a foundation of rock. "Upon this Rock" He built His Church. When the floods come and beat upon the house that "Wisdom hath builded,"[1] it will stand secure in the strength of its foundation, than which

[1] Prov. ix. 1.

none other can be laid; for if we were to try and build upon any other, be it the character of Christ, or His teaching, or His example—separate and apart from belief in His Divinity—we should find ourselves on the shifting sands of human speculation; the floods would whirl us away into the darkness which brooded upon them before the true Light came into the world—before "God . . . commanded the light to shine out of darkness . . . to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."[1]

But this faith is not all that God requires. It is not enough even that we have trust in Jesus Christ; we must have *love* for Him. And here, in the answer to this demand made by Jesus Christ, we find another proof of His Divinity.

This truth is beautifully expressed in one of Père Lacordaire's Conferences. He says: "God requires more than our minds; He requires our hearts; He requires affection. And what affection, great God? A love which is the fulness of human love, and before which all history of love is as nothing. And that you may judge of what a prodigy this is, let us examine closely the difficulties which we ourselves find in exciting love during our lives.

"Hardly has the flower of sentiment germinated within us before we seek in the companions of our youth sympathies which seize upon our hearts, and draw them

[1] 2 Cor. iv. 6.

forth from their dear and lonely solitude. Thence in the history of all generous lives come those youthful times, those early remembrances which none other will ever efface, and which, even in extreme old age, leave in our souls a perfume of the past. Yet, notwithstanding the strength of these young ties, the simple course of time suspends their progress; our eyes, in growing stronger, become less sensible to the beauties of our age, something no longer of childhood delivers us from the first charm, which perhaps none will ever equal, but which no longer suffices for us. Affection cools into grave and virile confidence, and our soul, having mounted a step upon the cycle of life, needs a new attraction, which, in filling it, brings it into subjection.

"But it is nevertheless true that, although pursuing love all our lives, we never obtain it save in a manner which is imperfect, and that wounds our hearts. And even had we obtained it during life, what would remain of it to us after death? I know that fond prayers may follow us beyond this world, that our names may still be pronounced in pious remembrance, but soon heaven and earth will have advanced another step; then comes oblivion; silence dwells upon us; the ethereal breeze of love passes over our tomb no more. It is gone—it is gone for ever; and such is the history of man in regard to love.

"I am wrong; there is a Man whose tomb is guarded by love; there is a Man whose sepulchre is not only glorious, as a prophet declared, but whose sepulchre is

loved. There is a Man whose ashes, after eighteen centuries, have not grown cold; who daily lives again in the thoughts of an innumerable multitude of men; who is visited in His cradle by shepherds and by kings, who vie with each other in bringing to Him gold and frankincense and myrrh. There is a Man whose steps are unweariedly retrodden by a large portion of mankind, and who, although no longer present, is followed by that throng in all the scenes of His bygone pilgrimage, upon the knees of His Mother, by the borders of the lakes, to the tops of the mountains, in the by-ways of the valleys, under the shade of the olive trees, in the still solitude of the deserts. There is a Man, dead and buried, whose sleep and whose awaking have ever eager watchers, whose every word still vibrates and produces more than love, produces virtues fructifying in love. There is a Man who, eighteen centuries ago, was nailed to a gibbet, and who millions of adorers daily detach from this throne of His suffering, and kneeling before Him, prostrating themselves as low as they can without shame; there, upon the earth, they kiss His bleeding feet with unspeakable ardour. There is a Man who was scourged, killed, crucified, whom an ineffable passion raises from death and infamy, and exalts to the glory of love unfailing, which finds in Him peace, honour, joy, and even ecstasy. There is a Man pursued in His sufferings and in His tomb by undying hatred, and who, demanding apostles and martyrs from all posterity, finds apostles and martyrs in all generations. There

is a Man, in fine, and One only, who has founded His love upon earth, and that Man is Thyself, O Jesus, who hast been pleased to baptize me, to anoint me, to consecrate me in Thy love, and whose Name alone now opens my very heart, and draws from it those accents which overpower me and raise me above myself.

"But among great men, who are loved? Among warriors? Is it Alexander? Cæsar? Charlemagne? Among sages? Aristotle or Plato? Who is loved among great men? Who? Name me even one; name me a single man who has died and left love upon his tomb. Mahomet is venerated by Mussulmen; he is not loved. No feeling of love has ever touched the heart of a Mussulman repeating his maxim: 'God is God, and Mahomet is His prophet.' One Man alone has gathered from all ages a love which never fails. Jesus Christ is the sovereign Lord of hearts as He is of minds."[1]

It is a wonderful thought! Then, in the centuries past He came down from the mount, and the multitudes followed Him; but few believed—fewer still loved—and so but few were healed. Outwardly He was a poor man, little known beyond His own neighbourhood; the great world, with its learning and its power and its riches, ignored Him or rejected Him.

But here and there He found faith, and "marvelled" at its greatness.

[1] Père Lacordaire, O. P., *The Foundation of the Reign of Jesus Christ.*

Now, throughout the whole world His Name is the only one that lives from that bygone century as a power. His teaching is the faith of millions; His Name is above every name.

But if faith in Jesus Christ leads to love for Jesus Christ, it is because on faith and love is built up the hope of mankind. Without human faith and human love, the world could not go on.

Without Divine faith and Divine love the spiritual kingdom cannot develop. Love is the easy way (in one sense) to perfection, but without faith love is impossible. We must believe in God, in Jesus Christ, in one another, if we would have love to God and man. We cannot love well one we do not know, and therefore that He might be known and loved God has "spoken unto us by His Son,"[1] Who has manifested Him to the world.

Love is the fulfilling of all law, and since we do not lightly transgress the will of one we love, obedience is the test of love. Our Lord taught this when He said, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." Faith worketh by love, and love manifests faith in obedience.

If this is so, we shall see how the diseases of our soul are healed. In faith the intellect returns to God; in love the affections centre upon Him; in obedience the will submits itself to the Divine will. It was in the reason, in the affections, and in the will that man went astray in the Fall. It is in the return of the

[1] Heb. i. 2.

reason, the affections, and the will to God through Jesus Christ that the wounds of the Fall are healed. Man returns to God and becomes conformed to the image of God when he becomes like Jesus Christ: "Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the First-born among many brethren."[1] But the first step is faith in God, for "without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is."[2]

God is made known through Jesus Christ, so that it could be said by Him: "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."[3] The Holy Spirit conforms the mind and heart of man to God, by imparting to the soul the transforming gift of love: "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost."[4]

Thus it comes about that, although with our bodily eyes we have not seen Jesus Christ, we yet love Him: "Whom having not seen, ye love,"[5] are words that described the love for Christ of the converts who were added to the Church after Pentecost. We know Him, for we see Him by faith; knowing Him and loving Him we hold fast His words and strive to obey His voice. We take to ourselves gladly the Apostolic command: "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus."[6]

[1] Rom. viii. 29. [2] Heb. xi. 6. [3] St. John xiv. 9.
[4] Rom. v. 5. [5] 1 St. Peter i. 8. [6] 2 Tim. i. 13.

PASSAGES FOR READING.

(1) Hebrews xi. 1–6. It is because we have faith in God's goodness that we have hope in His mercy.

(2) Hebrews xi. 7–10. These two examples illustrate how faith is shown by works. Noah's faith led him to build the ark. Abraham "went out, not knowing whither he went."

(3) Hebrews xi. 17–19. Here obedience is shown to be the test of faith, or trust in God. It is the works done in obedience that are the really good works.

(4) Hebrews xi. 24–29. We have often to suffer seeming loss through obedience to God.

(5) Hebrews xi. 32–40. God's most faithful servants are often called to suffer most for His sake. Troubles do not imply wickedness, or that God has forsaken us—far from it.

(6) St. James ii. 14–26. Neither faith alone, nor works alone, justify a man with God. It is "faith that *worketh* by love" that is acceptable with God.

XIII.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Jesus, the Sun of our Life

Prophecy

"But unto you that fear My Name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings." (Mal. iv. 2.)

Jesus Christ

"I am the Light of the world." (St. John viii. 12.)

The Soul

"The Lord will lighten my darkness." (2 Sam. xxii. 29.)

XIII.

Jesus, the Sun of our Life

IN the Eastern Church the Epiphany is known also by the name of "the Feast of Light." Various reasons are given by writers for the choice of this name, but whatever the original cause may have been, it is easy to find in the title thoughts which bring to our notice some aspects of the Festival.

Among the many beautiful symbols of the Divine Nature mentioned in Holy Scripture there is one which occurs again and again; namely, the symbol of light.

But it is of the Son of God especially that this figure is used. He is "the Light of the world,"[1] "the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world;"[2] just as beyond this world, where "the city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it,"[3] the reason is that "the Lamb is the Light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it."

We may well then, during this Epiphany season,

[1] St. John ix. 5. [2] St. John i. 9. [3] Rev. xxi. 23, 24.

consider some reasons why it seems appropriate that our Lord should reveal Himself as the true Light.

Now is fulfilled not only the prophecy that "a Star" should come "out of Jacob,"[1] but that prophecy of Isaiah also is accomplished, "the Gentiles shall come to Thy light, and kings to the brightness of Thy rising."[2]

Now the rays of the Sun of Righteousness begin to disperse the gloom that hovered around those who had long dwelt "in darkness and in the shadow of death," and to penetrate beyond the land of the chosen people into the dim, distant realms of heathendom. Jesus Christ has come "to be a Light to lighten the Gentiles," as well as "to be the glory of" His "people Israel."

In that Cave of Bethlehem, so dark within, so unlike the scenery of the everlasting home which He has left, we see (in the radiance of the light that streams from the manger) the forms of kneeling Gentile kings.

The Magi came in faith, seeing deep mysteries dimly, and adoring where they could not understand. They went away illuminated by the brightness of His Presence, and numbered among the first of those who "received Him," and to whom He gave "power to become the sons of God."[3]

In the Litany of the Holy Name we invoke our Lord as One Who is "brighter than the Sun." This title is given to Him for many reasons; we may briefly

[1] Num. xxiv. 17. [2] Isa. lx. 3. [3] St. John i. 12.

call to mind a few of them, and see how fitly He is made known as the Source of light. Under the figure of the sun we may see some of the ways in which our Lord enlightens, quickens, and perfects the souls of His people. What the sun is to the natural world, that is Jesus to His Church and to the souls of men; and the works wrought daily by the sun in the natural order are equalled and excelled by those which the Sun of Righteousness performs in the order of grace. In the first place, the sun is the centre of all the heavenly bodies belonging to its system; they revolve around it, but it remains stationary in regard to them.

And what else is Jesus Christ but the centre of the spiritual kingdom? Around Him the Saints revolve, and find in Him alone the centre of their faith, their hope, and their love.

If for a moment the sun were removed from its place all would become chaos. So also when the Sun of Righteousness is deposed from being the centre of the soul's life all becomes dark, confused, and falls into ruin.

Again, the sun regulates the orbits of the heavenly bodies, and even so the precepts and example of Jesus determine the limits and range of the actions of His Saints. Do we desire to know the law of repentance or the law of forgiveness? We at once turn to *Him* as our Master, our Example, and our Judge. What would Jesus Christ Himself have said, or done, or advised under such and such circumstances becomes for us, if

we are really trying to follow Him, our own law. We cannot always be sure that what we think our Lord would have done is really the example He would have set to us, but we can at least do our best to know His will, and to follow it. Once again, it is the earth's position in relation to the sun that causes the changes of day and night, times and seasons, winter and summer. Sometimes the sun is veiled by "earth-born clouds," at other times we feel and enjoy its warmth. Do we not know how true also this fact is in our spiritual life? How often do we not complain to Him that we are cold and lifeless? Our prayers, our Communions, all seem as if the fervour of Divine love had gone from them. But it may be His own lesson to our souls. In this life an unbroken spiritual summer might not be the best for our soul's health; it might only enervate and weaken us, and so cause us to rest too much on earth. Jesus Christ, perhaps, wishes to see if we will serve Him for nought, or only for the sake of the joy and comfort of spiritual sweetness, and so He hides Himself from us; and unless we can go steadily onward, trusting entirely to Him, remaining true, and waiting for the return of the sunshine, we shall often and often lose heart. Our Sun seems to have disappeared, the stars, God's holy ones, are no longer of any help, and the storms of temptation rage around. We are like those we read of in the Acts of the Apostles who, "when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on" them,

"all hope that" they "should be saved was then taken away."[1] But by the grace of God we regain courage; we go on steadily using our will, being sure that, without our *will* going wrong, we cannot long remain in darkness. "Heaviness may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."[2] The clouds pass away, and the brightness of the light of His Face shines upon us once more. We look up and feel that "truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun."[3]

But it may be, of course, that our darkness is not part of the discipline sent by God, but the result of our own wilfulness. The sun may shine, but we may hide from its light. God may walk in the garden of the soul, but what is said of Adam and Eve may be true of us, "they hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden."[4] Things of earthly growth may come between us and the Sun, and hinder the light and warmth of its rays from reaching us, leaving us in the land of shadows and unrealities. Or the light may be taken away:

"And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season."[5] The light long resisted is at last withdrawn, and while all the children of God have light in their dwellings we may be punished by a "thick darkness."[6]

The sun is not only the centre of the heavenly bodies,

[1] Acts xxvii. 20. [2] Ps. xxx. 5. [3] Eccles. xi. 7.
[4] Gen. iii. 8. [5] Acts xiii. 11. [6] Exod. x. 22.

but it has also power to quicken—to promote growth. Without the light and warmth of the sun the seed would not germinate, the sap would not rise and flow through the branches of trees and plants, and the bud, which afterwards expands into leaf and flower and fruit, would not be formed. The sun then is the great quickening power in the natural world.

Is not this a true figure of what Jesus Christ does for the soul? "The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit."[1] From the death of original sin He has raised us up to newness of life. And again, how often "hath He quickened" us, "who were dead in trespasses and sins,"[2] by the Precious Blood of His Cross flowing as a river of life through the channel of the Sacrament of Penance? For as the Divine Nature is in itself eternal Life, and the source of life to all things that live, so the Incarnate Son has also this divine, quickening power. "As the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom He will."[3]

Many a soul can already bless God for the fulfilment of that gracious promise, made by our Lord when He said, "The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live."[4]

This is indeed "the first Resurrection,"[5] and blessed

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 45. [2] Eph. ii. 1. [3] St. John v. 21.
[4] St. John v. 25. [5] Rev. xx. 5, 6.

are they who have part in it, for over them "the second death hath no power." They are "alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."[1]

And, once more, has He not quickened the world by His own *works*—works so full of love, of gentleness, and goodness—healing the sick, tending the poor? Or again, how has not this blessed Sun of Righteousness quickened the souls of His children to bring forth much fruit? Whence do the Sisters of Charity draw the warmth of love that enables them to go out and minister to the sick and poor of Christ? Who inspires those who labour in missions, and those who in many ways devote their lives to the welfare of others? Whose example do they follow? Whose voice encourages them? Whose praise do they look for but that of their Lord?

The good desire, the first effort, *He* has quickened; and if any of the Saints have been able to bear much fruit, it is the warmth of that Divine Sun that has fostered and made fruitful the longings of their hearts.

He, then, is our Sun and our Light, not only because He is the centre of our whole spiritual life, but because He quickens what otherwise would languish and die within us, and makes our lives fruitful in good works.

But to quicken is surely not enough?

The plant may bud, but die before it comes to its

[1] Rom. vi. 11.

full bloom; the tree may put forth its blossom, but its fruit may never ripen. If we need the sun to quicken, we also need its warmth to shine upon the growing fruit, to ripen and to perfect it. And this, too, is the work of Jesus Christ in the soul. God, Who hath begun the good work, must also perfect that which He has begun. What, then, is needed in order to bring our fruit to perfection? to ripen our soul? Surely it is to dwell in the sunshine of His Presence; to do all with Jesus, all for Jesus, all by Jesus. To be continually cutting off all that can hinder His rays from reaching us—pruning here, and there binding up more tightly something that is lax. God will Himself show us what is needed, only we must be generous, and if the pruning be painful we must not hold back; if the binding seem to tie us too closely to the Cross we must not refuse.

If, then, we can so *live* in the light of Christ we have His promise, "I will never leave thee";[1] it shall never be true of our soul that "her sun is gone down while it is yet day."[2] No, "at evening time it shall be light"; and though we must cross the dark valley where the shadow waits for each one of us, still we "will fear no evil,[3] but we will look onward to the end, and fix our eyes on the sunlight of the eternal home beyond, and there try to catch a glimpse of "the King in His beauty."[4] It was He Who once

[1] Heb. xiii. 5.
[2] Jer. xv. 9.
[3] Ps. xxiii. 4.
[4] Isa. xxxiii. 17.

for us made radiant the poor, dark Cave of Bethlehem—Who drew to His birthplace the pilgrim Magi —and Who in later years Himself passed along the valley of the shadow of death, and left a track of glory along the borders of the tomb, growing ever brighter and brighter as it nears the heavenly country where "thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended."[1]

PASSAGES FOR READING.

(1) Gen. i. 1–4. Created light is a type of the uncreated Brightness.

(2) 2 Cor. iv. 6. The uncreated Brightness is given to the world veiled under the Sacred Humanity.

(3) Is. lx. 1–3. The Incarnate Word draws by His Light the souls of all men to Himself.

(4) Eph. v. 14. God awakes the soul in order that it may "walk in the Light."

(5) Acts ix. 3. The story of the Conversion of St. Paul is an Epiphany of Light to the Gentiles.

(6) Rev. xxi. 23–25. Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, is the Light, not only of the Church on earth, but of the Church Triumphant. "In Thy light shall we see light." "Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face." "O send out Thy light and Thy truth, that they may lead me."

[1] Isa. lx. 20.

XIV.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

The Mystery of Evil

Prophecy

"Cursed be the man . . . whose heart departeth from the Lord." (Jer. xvii. 5.)

Jesus Christ

"He that soweth the good seed is the Son of Man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil." (St. Matt. xiii. 37-39.)

The Soul

"Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding." (Job xxviii. 28.)

XIV.

The Mystery of Evil

THE Parable of the Tares, which the Church has appointed as the Gospel for the Fifth Sunday after Epiphany, brings us face to face with the existence of evil in the world. It is worthy of notice, in passing, that with the first record of the coming of evil into the world the earth is represented as sharing in the curse. God, Who had at the first declared the fruitful earth that He had made to be "very good," immediately after the Fall speaks to Adam thus: "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee."[1]

It is therefore not strange that our Lord should take an evil growth of the soil—"the tares"—to represent "the children of the wicked one." Neither are we surprised that they who thought only of God's work in creation, which at the first He Himself had declared to be "very good,"[2] should wonder at the presence of "the tares," and ask, "Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?"[3]

[1] Gen. iii. 17, 18. [2] Gen. i. 31. [3] St. Matt. xiii. 27.

The existence and origin of evil is still a mystery that puzzles and perplexes mankind. We may therefore try to enter in some measure into the consideration of what is known of this strange blight that has fallen on the world. What is evil, and whence came it? "Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from *whence* then hath it tares?"

But evil is a vague term. When two things are opposed the one to the other, the characteristics of each may be best ascertained by the study of its opposite. Thus, darkness is known by its opposition to light. In the same way we may arrive at the knowledge of the nature of evil by the consideration of what we mean by "good." Aristotle defines "good" as "that which all things desire."[1]

St. Thomas Aquinas says that good ("est omne id, quod est appetibile") is "all that is desirable." Every creature desires not only its existence, but its perfection. Hence the being and the perfection of anything are of the essence of good and of goodness. It is therefore impossible that evil can be a "being" (quoddam esse) or have any independent existence. It can only be the absence or privation of good in some creature. Consequently "being," considered in itself, and "good," are one and the same thing. It is not possible to destroy all that is good in anything without destroying its existence altogether.[2]

[1] *Ethics*, lib. i. cap. i.

[2] *Summa Theo.* pars i. quæs. v. art. i.–iii., and quæs. xlviii.

It follows from this that evil is the absence or privation in some degree of that perfectness which properly belongs to anything or any being.

Leibnitz distinguishes between (1) metaphysical evil or imperfection, which is unconditionally willed by God as essential to created beings; (2) physical evil—such as pain, death, and disease—which is conditionally willed by God as a punishment, or as a means to greater good; and (3) moral evil, which he says is merely permitted and not willed by God; being allowed, although foreseen, because even with evil the world is, nevertheless, better than any other possible world.[1]

It is not, however, possible, except in a very wide and unusual sense, to allow the existence of metaphysical evil. If evil were the mere absence of some conceivable perfection in a creature, the abolition of metaphysical evil would involve the destruction of all creatures, since no created being exists that could not conceivably be more perfect. The existence of things finite involves the absence of perfection that is infinite—since the perfect and the infinite are one. The old beliefs in two Infinite Beings, the one good and the other evil, have long since been removed from the list of things reasonable. There is an evident absurdity in the supposition of two hostile co-ordinate First Principles—two independent Infinite Beings. Metaphysical defect is therefore not properly to be called "evil." There is no real evil in the want of sensation

[1] *Opera Phil.* ("Théodicée"), Erdmann.

in a stone, or in the absence of a rational soul in brutes. Evil is not the mere lack of perfection or of conceivable good in a creature, but the lack of the perfection and good that ought to be found in a creature, and that belongs to the integrity of its nature.

St. Thomas says that "evil is the privation of good, and not its mere negation; . . . not every lack of good in a creature is evil, but the lack of some good that is natural to it, and that it ought to have."[1]

Hence, he goes on to say, the lack of sight in a man is an evil, but not in a stone, since it is not in the nature of a stone to have sight. Everything in fact is good just in so far as it is a realisation of the idea of God in creation. If it fulfils the purpose for which it was made, it is good; if it does not, it is because there is some privation of good either physical or moral.

2. Physical evil, we see at once, is evil properly so called, since pain, disease, and the loss of limb and life is a deprivation of some portion of the good that belongs by nature to a creature.

A blind or deaf person is evidently so called because by nature men are gifted with sight and hearing. The blind, and the deaf, and all those who suffer, are in an abnormal state, deprived of some good that is proper to the integrity of their being. St. Augustine, in the

[1] "Malum privatio est boni, et non negatio pura . . . non omnis defectus boni est malum, sed defectus boni, quod natum est, et debet haberi." *Summa Theo.* i. xlviii. v.

Enchiridion, asks, "What is that which we call evil but the absence of good? In the bodies of animals disease and wounds mean nothing but the absence of health; for when a cure is effected, that does not mean that the evils which are present—namely, the diseases and wounds—go away from the body and dwell elsewhere; they altogether cease to exist; for the wound or disease is not a substance, but a defect in the fleshly substance—the flesh itself being a substance, and therefore something good, of which those evils, that is, privations of the good which we call health—are accidents."[1]

St. Augustine is here insisting that evil has no separate independent existence. It is not a first substantial Principle—in other words, it is not an Infinite Being. But neither is it a finite being, since every finite creature owes its existence to a creative act of the Infinite. If evil were a finite being it must then have its origin in God; but it is an impossibility that evil should trace itself back to a source that is infinitely good; consequently, evil is not a "being," finite or infinite.

This truth was evident to the great pre-Christian philosophers. Plato declares in his *Republic* that every poet must confess that the gods are good, and therefore cannot be the cause of anything except good.

The gods must be shown as the causes of all the good that exists, but other causes must be found for all that is evil.

[1] *De fide, spe, et charitate*, xi.

Evil, therefore, has no separate independent being, nor any existence apart from good.

This leads to the truth that good is what is called the "seat" or "subject" of evil,[1] and is included in the statement that evil is the privation of good; but only a partial, never a complete deprivation.

All beings are in their origin good—since God alone is the Creator of all things "visible and invisible." But since, as we have said, creatures are by their very existence necessarily not infinitely good, their good is capable of being increased or diminished. To lessen good is an evil; but since being is in itself good, as long as a being continues to exist it cannot be without any good.

3. We come now to moral evil—or evil in the strict sense of the word. No blame necessarily attaches to those who suffer from physical evils. Clearly they befall both man and brute without any choice of their own, and indeed in spite of their own wish and will. Physical evil is in its nature penal, while moral evil, on the contrary, necessarily results in guiltiness.

Hence St. Thomas divides evil into pain and guilt—*pœna et culpa.*

Every creation of God is the expression in time of some pre-existent idea in the mind of the Creator. A human workman is frequently unable to produce the ideal he conceives mentally; but to the Divine Being

[1] See *Summa Theo.* i. xlviii. iii. "Relinquitur ergo quod subjectum mali sit bonum."

there is no such difficulty. "God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good."[1] In the natural order of the world everywhere there reigns law and order. The seasons come and go; the sun, moon, and stars perform their silent service; the vegetable world knows no *anomia*; the brutes obey their instinct and thus fulfil the purpose of their existence. But directly we come to man it is quite the reverse. Here all is disorder; the good that he would do he is unable to perform; the evil he would not is that which he does.[2]

We observe this law in our inner self—and we ask if it was thus that God created man? It was not; for when man came forth from the hands of his Maker, he was included in the creation which was pronounced "very good." Man is therefore not as God intended him to be—not as He made him. This is implied in the parable of the Tares. The wheat and tares are not seeds of different kinds, but the tares are a degenerate or bastard wheat. Evil has its seat in the being of man, and evil is the deprivation of good. Man is spoken of as a fallen being, because by his own will and choice he has forfeited some of that wholeness of being with which he was originally gifted. But this deprivation is only another name for evil; since as good departs, evil is made present by that very departure.

When, then, we come to ask what moral evil is—what sin is—Holy Scripture has a plain, straightforward

[1] Gen. i. 31. [2] Rom. vii. 18, 19.

answer to the query: "Sin is the transgression of the law"[1]—it is lawlessness (ἡ ἀνομία). But what law does sin transgress? In the opinion of many persons sin is merely a name given by theologians to some actions that, for arbitrary reasons, have been forbidden by God. If this were so it would raise a serious difficulty as to whether or no the whole of religion, as we understand it in Christianity, is a superstition. That is to say, it would create a well-founded doubt as to the justice and goodness of God, and would tend to drag down the idea of God to an equality with that of a powerful earthly tyrant, whose arbitrary and often unjust will is expressed in the laws that he forces upon an unhappy captive people. In other words, if sin is not essentially and in its own nature an evil; if the act of "transgression" is merely the breaking of an arbitrary enactment that might be abolished without any harm resulting—then sin would become a mere conventional name, having in it nothing terrible except to the ignorant and superstitious.

We must ascertain then what is the "law" that sin transgresses. The human race is scattered over the earth in many groups. These groups, societies, or nations differ greatly in their moral and physical character. There is, however, a twofold bond of union between all nations; (1) the possession of a common humanity—a certain outward likeness in the formation of the human body, and the possession of mind and

[1] 1 St. John iii. 4.

free-will; and (2) the common acceptance of certain terms, such as good, evil, right, wrong, law, and duty. These and similar terms are understood and accepted in some degree among the wildest and most uncivilised tribes, as well as by the most cultured peoples of the world. There is evidently, therefore, some instinctive law written in the hearts of men that is recognised by the use of these terms. To wilfully transgress this law is "sin," and the idea of sin connects itself with the thought of the authority that has stamped this law upon the consciousness of the human race.

The common terms suggest that the law has but one source, and that the origin of the ideas which the terms above quoted express, is none other than the common Father, Who "hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth."[1] Sin is therefore the transgression of the Divine law; and the Divine law is the law of the character of God. Man was created in the image and likeness of God. The perfection or goodness of man consists in the keeping unimpaired of this resemblance to his Creator. The law of the creature's perfection lies in the preservation of the harmony and likeness that was designed to exist between himself and his Creator. It has been shown that all evil is the privation of some good designed to exist in the creature. Moral evil is the corruption of God's image in the soul of man. Moral evil carries

[1] Acts xvii. 26.

with it moral guilt, because its essential characteristic is the perverse and wrong use of the will. To a certain extent this eternal law of the character of God is impressed upon all men. It is this fact that accounts for the universal idea of right and wrong. There is no *guilt* unless there is a wilful departure from the known standard of right. There is no moral evil—no formal sin—where there is no wilful disobedience to a conscience that has not been already distorted by previous wilful neglect of its teaching.

The lawlessness, then, of sin consists in the transgression of that known law which is the perfection of the creature, and the consequent lessening of that "good" in man which is essentially needful to his own happiness, since his departure from likeness to God must needs be a departure from his own highest beatitude. The more the created will of man turns from the will of God, the more unlike becomes the creature to the Creator.

But here it may be objected that after all it is a mere arbitrary enactment that the happiness of man should be involved in likeness to God, or (if such a likeness be indeed essential to beatitude) that man should have been given the power to transgress the law of his own perfection.

These objections cannot stand. They presuppose that the finite reason of man is able to judge and condemn what the infinite wisdom of God has permitted. If there is to be any standard of moral good

it must necessarily be the character of the Infinitely Good, in so far as it can be made known to man. To suppose that a standard of moral good can exist in acknowledged contradiction to the character of God is absurd. The objection against the gift of free-will resolves itself into an objection against the creation of man. The gradual ascent of creation towards the Creator seems to demand that somewhere we should find a reflection of the freedom and choice that, in their absolute perfection, belong to God. But God (as far as we can see) could not bestow free-will on a finite being without the possibility of its deterioration. The gift of free-will involves the possible choice of that which is hostile to the law of perfection which is the character of God. If the scale of creation, fulfilling its service of God, was ever to ascend beyond the involuntary, machine-like perfection of "nature," there must be not only reason but free-will given to the creature. In no other way could there be a tribute of homage paid by the creature to the perfection of the Creator. Sin is a departure from this perfection, and therefore "sin is the transgression of *the* law."

St. Thomas divides "law" into five divisions: eternal, natural, divine, human, and "the law of sin."

"The eternal law is the Divine Perfection; the natural law is conscience; the divine law is the explicit commands of God to man; human law is the command of a human superior to a human inferior."

The divine law and human law are made up of positive commands or prohibitions. A command is the expression of a desire for the performance or avoidance of certain actions, with the threat of punishment in case of disobedience; or, as it has been said, law is a command distinguished by this peculiarity, "that the party to whom it is directed is liable to evil from the other, in case he comply not with the desire."[1]

The punishment threatened is called a "sanction," and the duty or command is thus said to be "sanctioned" by the penalty. Command, duty, and sanction are therefore inseparable terms. This fact Austin expresses thus: "Each of the three terms expresses the same notion, but each *denotes* a different part of that notion, and *connotes* the residue."

The laws of God are said to be either revealed or unrevealed; that is to say, they are either expressed in positive commands or prohibitions, or else are those we understand by such phrases as "the light of nature," "natural reason," "conscience," and the like.

By the "eternal law" we understand therefore that standard of right which is fixed by the Divine Nature, and must everywhere and always be the same.

The divine law may vary, as it has done, for instance, in the passing of the Jewish into the Christian Church. Human law is of course variable; it is binding unless

[1] *Province of Jurisprudence Determined*, J. Austin.

it evidently clashes with the divine or eternal law. But all just laws are in some degree related to the eternal law. Every positive law or command—divine or human—may be traced, though perhaps only indirectly and remotely, to this eternal standard of good; to some connection with that service which we owe to God, to our neighbour, or to ourselves. The commands of the divine law (as embodied, let us say, in the Ten Commandments) are all traceable in their substance to the law of the character of God; the prohibitions are equally a warning against some actions which would infringe this law of perfection, though but for the explicit "thou shalt not" the creature might fail to realise this. Moral good is what ought to be in acts of choice made by the creature. Moral evil is what ought not to be in acts of choice. Conscience has been bestowed as a guide in these matters of choice, and, when not perverted, intuitively perceives the difference between what ought and ought not to be chosen. The conscience may be ill-informed, but no moral guilt attaches to a mistaken choice. Such a choice may lead to a material, but never to a formal sin; that is to say, the act may in itself be wrong, but there is no guilt if the intention, if the will, be right. Guilt presupposes voluntary wrong-doing. As, therefore, the moral law is not an arbitrary one, so it is sanctioned by no arbitrary penalties. *Pœna* is the shadow of *culpa*, a shadow that indeed often appears as grotesquely exaggerating its substance; but, for all

that, the laws that regulate light and shadow in the natural order are not arbitrary ones, and the sanctions of the moral law are doubtless intimately connected with the guilt that distorts the likeness of man to God.

As long as man abides in union with God he abides "under the shadow of the Almighty."[1] Directly man separates from God in any degree he finds that he has a shadow of his own—the shadow is the penalty—*pœna*, that follows wrong-doing—*culpa*.

But just as sin is an act that operates in the unseen inner being of man, so it may often be that no visible shadow darkens the life of the transgressor. It is only when sin enlists the body in its service that a temporal penalty, here and now, is made possible. That there is, however, a "temporal punishment" following every sin, however spiritual the sin may be, is the teaching of the Church, and follows from the close connection between cause and effect. This penalty is called "temporal" to distinguish it from the eternal punishment, which is the enduring shadow of an enduring separation from God; whereas the temporal punishment is due to merely temporary departures from union with God. The temporal punishment that follows every sin is borne here on earth, or if not here, then hereafter. Every formal sin is a wilful turning aside (σκολιὸς) from the law of the eternal character of God. The voluntariness of the act is of

[1] Ps. xci. 1.

the essence of sin: it is a wilful transgression. This wilfulness is a point of primary importance in the consideration of sin and its punishment. It involves the distinction between what theologians call material and formal sin—between a merely wrong action, and an action done from a wrong motive.

We see then the danger of sin, properly so called —wilful transgression of the known right. Any act often repeated tends to form a habit and character. An act of sin turns man in a greater or lesser degree from union and harmony with God. Repeated acts of sin tend to make this discord habitual, and in case of mortal sin to accustom the soul to separation from God. The will becomes habitually at variance with the Divine will, and more and more distorted.

What is final impenitence and eternal damnation but the passing of a soul out of the time of probation, with its human will and character wilfully at variance with the will and character of God?

Even to our limited understanding there is nothing improbable in the fact that the separation of soul and body may terminate the probation of man. It certainly terminates his life on earth. Man is not "body" only, or "soul" only, but the union of body and soul. What he does as man he does therefore while the body and soul are united. The soul, apart from the body, is incapable of performing a human act, and therefore it may well be that it cannot undo, in the disembodied

state, the work it did in the body, or change its attitude towards God.

It might be thought that the reunion of the soul and body in the resurrection would render a change possible —but of that we have nothing revealed to us. All we are told is that "*now* is the accepted time," "*now* is the day of salvation."[1] "The tares," our Lord tells us, "are gathered and burned in the fire"—this is their end, to be rooted out and destroyed.

The separation between the wheat and the tares is the work of Divine wisdom wrought by the agency of those holy Angels, who, in the beginning, remained true to God: "The Son of Man shall send forth His Angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity."[2] "The Angels, which kept not their first estate,"[3] had, we believe, been the first of God's creatures to offend; it is fitting therefore that the holy Angels should assist at the final destruction of evil. "The harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the Angels."[4]

"The good seed are the children of the kingdom";[5] they are the inheritors of the heavenly country, for "Such as are blessed of God shall possess the land."[6]

"The tares are the children of the wicked one";[7] they shall be gathered out of the kingdom and burned —"the end of the ungodly is, they shall be rooted out

[1] 2 Cor. vi. 2. [2] St. Matt. xiii. 41. [3] St. Jude 6.
[4] St. Matt. xiii. 39. [5] St. Matt. xiii. 38. [6] Ps. xxxvii. 22.
[7] St. Matt. xiii. 38.

at the last."[1] What this may literally mean we cannot say.

Does it teach the final annihilation of the wicked? It might seem so if other passages of Holy Scripture did not lead to quite another conclusion—if the teaching of the Church did not forbid us to believe that the unsaved—the wicked—will ever cease to be. "Whenever fire is used as a symbol of the future punishment of sin the wicked are compared to vegetable matter, to vine branches, or fruit trees, or chaff, or weeds, all which are destroyed utterly, and never purified or benefited by fire."[2]

Dr. Agar Beet in his book, *The Last Things*, thus gives "the result" of a most careful study of God's written Word on this subject. Speaking of the punishment of the wicked he writes: "Of this acute suffering of the lost the writers of the New Testament see no end; nor do they teach anything which logically implies, or even suggests that it will ever end. On the other hand, they do not go so far as expressly and indisputably to assert the endless permanence of these ruined and wretched ones, and the consequent endlessness of their torment. The curtain is raised for a moment, revealing the anguish of the lost, and then falls, hiding them from our view."[3]

Of one thing we can alone be sure—that nothing that is unjust, nothing that is cruel, nothing that is

[1] Ps. xxxvii. 39.

[2] *The Last Things*, Dr. AGAR BEET.

[3] Page 226.

inconsistent with the character of God can happen to any soul of man. "Salvation, and glory, and power, belong to our God: for true and righteous are His judgments."[1]

PASSAGES FOR READING.

(1) 1 St. John iii. 4–10. St. John's teaching about freedom from sin is difficult to understand. He says, he that is born of God cannot sin, and (chapter i. 8) "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves."

The Church teaches that the regenerate can by grace avoid mortal sin, but all will fall into venial sin almost certainly. People who say they have no sin are usually those who are most blind to their faults. The more holy a man is, the less likely is he to think or say that he has "no sin."

(2) 2 Cor. xiii. 5–7. Self-examination is a necessary precaution against self-delusion. Especially before Holy Communion is self-examination needful in order to find out our sins. We must *know* what we have done wrong, if we are to confess it and be absolved. (1 St. John i. 9.)

(3) St. John xvi. 7–11. The Holy Ghost enlightens the understanding and convinces of sin. Let us always say the *Veni Creator* before self-examination.

(4) 1 St. John i. 7. The Precious Blood can alone wash away the stain of sin. (*cf.* Eph. i. 7; 1 St. Peter i. 18, 19.)

(5) St. John xx. 22, 23. Our Lord has given "power and commandment to His ministers to declare and pronounce to His people, being penitent, the absolution and remission of their sins." This power is given to every Priest at his Ordination. (See Book of Common Prayer.)

[1] Rev. xix. 1, 2, R.V.

(6) Acts xix. 18. Confessions, in the Apostolic and Primitive Church, were usually heard in public. Those who dislike private confession have a right to make their own publicly, but for many centuries people have preferred private sacramental confession. There is no particular virtue in the privacy or the publicity, so long as we follow the Scriptural practice of "auricular confession" of some sort. Confession may be made to anyone—Priest or Layman. "Confess your faults one to another." (St. James v. 16.) If a man, however, requires *absolution*, he must confess in the hearing of a Priest, since to them alone God has given "power and commandment" to absolve.

XV.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

The Five Kings of the Amorites

Prophecy

"Then said Joshua . . . Bring out those five kings unto me . . . And . . . Joshua smote them, and slew them." (Joshua x. 22, 26.)

Jesus Christ

"Those Mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before Me."

(St. Luke xix. 27.)

The Soul

"Slack not thy hand from thy servants; come up to us quickly, and save us, and help us: for all the kings of the Amorites that dwell in the mountains are gathered together against us."

(Joshua x. 6.)

XV.

The Five Kings of the Amorites

IT was with a sinking heart that Adoni-zedec, king of Jerusalem, heard how Joshua had taken Ai and utterly destroyed it, and how the inhabitants of Gibeon, that great city, whose warriors were all valiant men, had "made peace with Israel and were among them."

In haste he sent word to his neighbouring princes, saying, "Come up unto me, and help me, that we may smite Gibeon: for it hath made peace with Joshua and with the children of Israel."[1] In answer to this call to arms the "five kings of the Amorites . . . gathered themselves together, and went up, they and all their hosts, and encamped before Gibeon, and made war against it."[2] The men of Gibeon, terrified at the sight of the great and powerful hosts that were thus arrayed against them, sent in all haste to Joshua, saying, "Come up to us quickly, and save us, and help us; for all the kings of the Amorites that dwell in the mountains are gathered together against us."[3] Joshua did not delay, but "ascended from Gilgal, he, and all the people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valour," and

[1] Joshua x. 4. [2] *v.* 5. [3] *v.* 6.

"came unto them suddenly."[1] Before he went he had the promise of Divine assistance, and the assurance of victory—"The Lord said unto Joshua, Fear them not; for I have delivered them into thine hand; there shall not a man of them stand before thee."[2] Then there followed that strange battle when "the Lord fought for Israel," and the five hostile kings fled from the field and hid themselves in the cave of Makkedah.

When the day's fighting was over and the enemy so vanquished that "none moved his tongue against any of the children of Israel,"[3] Joshua said, "Open the mouth of the cave, and bring out those five kings unto me out of the cave. And they did so, and brought forth those five kings unto him out of the cave. . . . And it came to pass, when they brought out those kings unto Joshua, that Joshua called for all the men of Israel, and said unto the captains of the men of war which went with him, Come near, put your feet upon the necks of these kings. And they came near, and put their feet upon the necks of them. And Joshua said unto them, Fear not, nor be dismayed, be strong and of good courage; for thus shall the Lord do to all your enemies against whom ye fight."[4]

I.

In this story we have, in the first place, the actual historical facts recorded, but we have also a series of spiritual instructions. We may indeed find in this

[1] Joshua x. 7, 9. [2] *v.* 8. [3] *v.* 21. [4] *vv.* 22–25.

history many lessons. It prefigures the Church of God ever attacked by the world, calling to her true Joshua to fight for her, and under His banner going forth "conquering, and to conquer."

Or we may take it as a lesson to the Church to trust in God, Who will, if need be, even exercise miraculous power rather than suffer those who put their confidence in Him to be confounded.

Once more, we may see in it the great conflict of the world against the Incarnate Son, when "the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers" took "counsel together, against the Lord, and against His Anointed."[1] These are lessons that concern the Church as a body, but there is another meaning hidden in this story of war against Gibeon. It is a kind of parable of the spiritual life of every soul that is seeking after righteousness.

May we not see in the inhabitants of Gibeon making peace with Joshua a picture of the soul of man voluntarily surrendering itself to the obedience of Christ? The motives of such a conversion may be various. The soul may make its peace with God through fear, lest the judgments that have fallen upon the rebellious should fall upon it also, to its utter destruction; or the soul may hasten to reconcile itself with Jesus Christ through a desire to escape from the disordered anarchy of the passions, and to live under His government. But from whatever motive

[1] Ps. ii. 2.

the soul seeks its peace, and submits itself to Jesus Christ, it is quite certain that the submission will be firmly opposed by the fallen nature, acting through the five senses. St. Paul has sketched in vivid language the battle that is being fought in the soul of every man who has not hopelessly surrendered to the enemy.[1]

It was the knowledge that Gibeon had made peace with Israel that made the five Amorite kings league themselves together to destroy Gibeon. It is when the will of man—which is, as it were, a "great city," and "one of the royal cities,"[2] having even in its fallen state almost godlike regal power—offers itself to do the will of God that the evil one fears greatly.

The will must be taken captive, ensnared, destroyed, and brought over to the enemy—it must be enlisted against the Captain of the Lord's host, and made an ally of His enemies. That this may be accomplished the five senses unite against the will. They cry out to one another, "Come up unto me, and help me, that we may smite Gibeon: for it hath made peace with Joshua and with the children of Israel."[3]

The whole of the struggle we are now thinking of takes place within the being of man. It is true that his spiritual life is also attacked from without, but the more fierce and the more terrible battle is from within. It is of this St. Paul is speaking when he says, "I see another law in my members, warring

[1] Rom. vii. 14–25. [2] Joshua x. 2. [3] Joshua x. 4.

against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members."

It is especially in the early stages of the spiritual life that the war of the senses against the will—of the natural man against the spiritual man—has to be waged. The senses are as yet ill-trained, the passions fierce and unruly. If we add to this the fact that in many cases there has been before conversion a long period of voluntary slavery to the senses, with but a feeble resistance to their dictates, we shall see how difficult the struggle must be to break away from their despotic rule, and enter into the peace of God. The senses are the channels to the soul of the elements of all knowledge. In themselves they are, of course, the gift of God—they are a part of that wonderful equipment by means of which man is placed in contact with the universe. It is only when the senses are allowed to obscure the reason and dominate the will, to lead man away from God instead of keeping him subject to His will, that they become the channels of evil. It is when they rid themselves of the bridle of reason—gain over the will and drag it into fellowship with their irregularities—that the senses become, as it were, the enemies of the soul, helping to tear it from the peace of God, and striving to enlist the will in the misuse of those very faculties that God has given for the soul's temporal and eternal welfare. We must, therefore, not condemn the senses, but the inordinate gratification of the senses,

which leads man to reject reason, and misuse his will at their command. St. Augustine draws out this distinction. "One may contemplate," he writes, "the deep azure vault of heaven spangled with bright stars, and laudably take pleasure in this vision. On the other hand, we may look at theatrical shows (*spectacula theatrorum*), at obscene sights, at vicious or dangerous objects, and derive from the use of our eyes an unlawful gratification. So, too, we may listen to a sacred chant, or we may fill our ears with filthy songs. The former is lawful, the latter sinful." St. Augustine continues the same thought in reference to the sense of touch, and concludes with the words, "You see, therefore, there is both a lawful and unlawful use of the senses." The danger is, as St. Augustine writes in another part of his works, that, "Whatever delights the eyes by its beauty, whatever is pleasing to the taste, sweet to the smell, soft to the touch, if we are incautious in taking these pleasures when forbidden, or if we take them, not out of any good motive, but merely to gratify the cravings of human passion, we always tarnish our souls, and fulfil the saying of the Prophet that death, the death of sin, enters by the 'windows'[1] of the senses to destroy our souls."

We have only to remember the examples given us in Holy Writ in order to recognise the danger that lurks in these five senses. What are we told of the first temptation and the first sin? The woman listened

[1] Jer. ix. 21.

to the voice of the tempter after she was aware that his suggestion was to distrust God, Who had in every way deserved her confidence. The next step was the looking upon the forbidden fruit with desire to take of it. "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was *pleasant to the eyes*,[1] and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof."[2] The withdrawal of the will from its allegiance to God, that had been suggested by the hearing, was consummated by the sight. Touch and taste were speedily enlisted in the revolt, assisted, it may well be, by the fragrant scent of the forbidden fruit. Thus in the fall of man the senses played an important part. Whether we take the story as a simple historical record or as an allegory does not much matter. What we are taught is that the best gifts of God, designed for our enjoyment and for our welfare, are full of power to work our ruin, and to bring misery upon us if they are not used in obedience to the law of God. That law may be written in our hearts through conscience and reason, or it may be expressed in explicit commands; but however it may come to our knowledge it will soon be followed by temptation to disregard it, and this temptation will, in nine cases out of ten, force itself upon us through those avenues of the soul—the bodily senses.

Again, the two great sins in David's life were due in the first instance to the apparently accidental sight of

[1] "A desire" to the eyes—is the marginal reading. [2] Gen. iii. 6.

the woman who "was very beautiful to look upon."[1] This unguarded use of the eyes led David into adultery, and then into the further sin of plotting Uriah's death. It is not necessary, however, to refer to Holy Scripture in support of a fact of which we have all in some degree had personal experience, either in our own life-story or in our daily knowledge of the world.

In St. Paul's sombre catalogue of the works of the flesh there are not a few in which the senses are employed, and he fitly describes the man who is governed entirely by the senses as the "carnal"[2] man. Whether or no we have in the past "served sin," we can only defend ourselves against the tyranny of the senses in the same way that the people of Gibeon sought defence against the Amorite kings. They besought Joshua to come to their aid, and placed themselves under his command. "Slack not thy hand from thy servants; come up to us quickly, and save us, and help us." The Christian who has made the most progress in the way of perfection will be the first to acknowledge that his victories have only been gained by prayer and the grace of Jesus Christ, the Saviour and Helper of His people. They have besought His grace, and He Who was typified by Joshua has come to their rescue. In His might, under His banner, and in obedience to His commands, they have repulsed and driven back their enemies. The people of God have learned not to trust in their own strength; they use the natural gifts that

[1] 2 Sam. xi. 2. [2] 1 Cor. iii. 3.

God has given them, but they also call to their side the great Captain of their salvation, in order that His strength may perfect their weakness.

Again, we read in the story of the subdual of these Amorite kings that when the battle went against them "these five kings fled, and hid themselves in a cave at Makkedah."

Even so in the spiritual combat, after a struggle has been made successfully against the attempted tyranny of the senses, they seem to give up the contest. They lie hidden, as it were, and quiet, awaiting, if it may so be, the time when they can come forth from their hiding-place, collect their forces, and again renew the battle. But Joshua was not deceived by this withdrawal of the enemy. He knew that as long as these hostile kings lived there could be no peace. He therefore ordered that first of all they should be brought out of the cave into his presence, and then, after humiliation, be put to death. Here we have in figure the perfect victory of Jesus Christ over temptation, and also the part He calls upon us to take in that victory.

Until the appearance of Joshua the kings had ruled in almost undisputed despotism, but now they hear on all sides of the victories of Joshua, and it is time, they feel, to contest his advance.

Joshua, the captain of the Lord's host, is the type of Jesus Christ. It is true that Joshua has the same fallen nature as the five kings who kneel in his presence; but Joshua, as a righteous man, is allowed to

represent "the Lord our Righteousness," Who, in the Incarnation, took to Himself our nature, yet without sin. In the Old Testament story this separation between the sinless Humanity of our Lord and the fallen human nature is typified by the hostile evil powers kneeling before Joshua. Joshua represents the Sacred Humanity in which the senses are in complete allegiance to the Divine will. The five kings represent the fallen nature in which the senses have gone astray into rebellion against God. Joshua commands these rebel kings to be brought before him; he gives the order to his captains, "Come near, put your feet upon the necks of these kings," and then we read that "afterward Joshua smote them, and slew them, and hanged them on five trees."[1]

In applying this to the coming of Jesus Christ we have only to recall the state of the world to see how, until His Incarnation, the senses—the sensual life—ruled the human race. The story of the moral life of ancient Greece and Rome is a record of the triumph of the senses. "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works. Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment. Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity: for that is thy portion in this life, and in thy

[1] Joshua x. 26.

labour which thou takest under the sun. Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest."[1] In these words we have a philosophy of life which commended itself, not to one nation only, but to the bulk of mankind. It inevitably degenerated into unbridled licence.

The coming of God in the Flesh necessarily brought the Ideal of Holiness into contact with the fallen world, and roused the enmity of evil spirits and evil men. The multitude loved darkness rather than light; it was therefore not surprising that Jesus Christ was, from the first, surrounded by enemies. We find Him, immediately after the beginning of His active ministry, led up of the Spirit to be tempted in the wilderness. The first man had been tempted in the earthly paradise, all-beautiful as it came from the creative act of God. The Second Adam is tempted in the desert, a fitting type of the havoc of sin. Part of the primal curse had fallen on the very soil itself: "Cursed is the ground for thy sake"; "thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee."[2]

We may notice how the temptation of our Lord followed an ascending scale. The evil one, desirous probably of assuring himself as to whether or no our Lord was the Incarnate God, and filled with a mad desire to thwart the Divine will as to redemption,

[1] Eccles. ix. 7-10. [2] Gen. iii. 17, 18.

first proposed the gratification of appetite—strangely linking his temptation in the desert with his suggestion in Eden.

But the climax of the trial of the Son of Man was not reached until "the devil taketh Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto Him, All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me."[1]

If, as St. Paul says, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God,"[2] distrust may come by hearing, and hearing by the word of Satan—"a liar"[3] from the beginning.

In this effort he followed the precedent of Eden, but he was foiled. His word is rejected, and the sustaining power of the word of God is quoted for his rebuke, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."[4]

Failing in his attack upon one sense of our Lord he tries another; true to his former temptation in Eden, he passes on to attack the sacred will of the Second Adam by the sense of sight. By the glorious vision of the kingdoms of the world he seeks to draw the Son of Man from his allegiance to God into the worship of himself. But all in vain. Our Lord turns to the fallen angel with the stern words of rebuke, "Get

[1] St. Matt. iv. 8, 9.
[2] Rom. x. 17.
[3] St. John viii. 44.
[4] St. Matt. iv. 4.

thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."[1]

The true Joshua has so far triumphed that the rebel powers of darkness are driven to retreat, "Then the devil leaveth Him."

We read that Joshua himself destroyed the rebel kings, "Joshua smote them, and slew them, and hanged them on five trees: and they were hanging upon the trees until the evening."[2] In the fulfilment of what was then typified we must notice that our Lord identified Himself with our fallen nature, although His own human Body and Soul were stainless. If He is to smite the kings He will do it by being Himself "stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted."[3]

It is therefore written that when He utterly abolished the whole body of sin He became the sin-bearer. "He was wounded," not because His own senses had rebelled, but because we had fallen under the tyranny of the senses. "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed . . . . He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare His generation? for He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of My people was He stricken."[4] He Himself "bare our sins in His own body on the tree."[5] "He died unto sin once,"[6] that we might have power

[1] St. Matt. iv. 10. [2] Joshua x. 26. [3] Isa. liii. 4.
[4] Isa. liii. 5, 8. [5] 1 Peter ii. 24. [6] Rom. vi. 10.

to put our feet upon the necks of the rebel senses. He was pierced with five wounds upon the Tree of the Cross that the wounds of our sensuality might be healed. Every sense in His sacred body was filled with pain; His sight, by the vision of all that mocking crowd around the Cross, and by the grief of His Mother and the beloved Disciple; His hearing, by the blasphemy of the chief priests and the scribes, and by the taunts of the impenitent thief; His taste, by the vinegar and the blood; while there was no part of His body that was not suffering from the scourging, the nailing to the Cross, and the fierce heat of the sun. He was hanging upon the Tree of shame "until the evening," in order that all the life of man, who "goeth forth to his work, and to his labour until the evening,"[1] might be healed by union with His Cross. His victory has merited power for us to overcome—to obey the old symbolic command, "Come near, put your feet upon the necks of these kings." We cannot yet entirely slay the evil within us; we shall never be sinless in this life. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us,"[2] but we can, and must be subduing the evil within us. The promise to those that "abide under the shadow of the Almighty" is, "Thou shalt go upon the lion and the adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou tread under thy feet."[3] If Christ our Saviour and our Helper fight with us we shall trample upon the power of

[1] Ps. civ. 23. [2] 1 St. John i. 8. [3] Ps. xci. 13.

hell — the cry will escape from our lips, as one of thanksgiving for a victory not won by our own might alone, but still ours, "O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength."[1] "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."[2]

II.

We have now to turn to the means by which this victory over the tyranny of the senses is gained. It is by union first of all with Jesus Christ—by sheltering ourselves under His protection, fighting under His banner, so that we fight not alone, but through Him, with Him, and in Him. For this purpose we are united to Him in our baptism, we are made members of Christ. For this purpose we are ranked among the true children of Gibeon, who have made peace with Israel. We are taken out of the alliance with the rebel kings, which is ours by nature, and placed among the Israel of God. It is of this St. Paul speaks in gratitude in his Epistle to the Colossians, "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son."[3] It is in order that we may manfully fight beneath the banner of the Cross as Christ's faithful soldiers, that we are signed with the Cross on the day of our enlisting in the army of God.

[1] Judges v. 21. [2] 1 Cor. xv. 57. [3] Col. i. 12, 13.

The weapons of our warfare are then given to us. They are the three great virtues of faith, hope, and love. The faith that believes, the hope that prays, and the love that obeys. Well indeed does the Church pray beside the Font for the new recruit that he "being stedfast in faith, joyful through hope, and rooted in charity," "may finally come to the land of everlasting life"—to Canaan, the promised land of the people of God. But none can pass over to Canaan without many a battle against those hostile powers who dispute their progress. The five kings of the Amorites will in no wise let us abide in the peace of the Israel of God. We must fight in self-defence; we can only go up and possess the land by turning out and destroying those who will not submit to the rule of our Master. Many and many a soul growing tired of the conflict surrenders to the rebel princes and falls under their despotism. The soul grows weary in well-doing; the life of the senses seems harmless and pleasant; the resistance becomes more and more feeble until it finds itself no longer the servant and soldier of God, but the slave of sin. "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?"[1] Faith grows dim, hope is lost, and charity dies. Instead of the companionship of the children of God and a life ordered in obedience to the law of God, the soul finds itself in a strange country

[1] Rom. vi. 16.

ubi umbra mortis, et nullus ordo, sed sempiterna horror inhabitat—where is the shadow of death, and no order, but everlasting horror dwelleth.[1]

But even here the voice of God finds out the soul, moves it to discontent at its present state, and then to take the needful steps to regain the way of peace. The soul turns from sin to God—is converted. The rebel senses rise up to hinder this reconciliation. It is then that faith, hope, and love are called to do their utmost. They are still in the soul, though weakened by neglect. The soul seeks in repentance again to enlist under the banner of her Lord, and again goes forth to fight. The wounds of Jesus, retained even in the Resurrection, speak of the fight, and therefore the soul must fight also. The subdual of the passions will mean a sharing in the crucifixion. "With Christ," St. Paul said, "I am nailed to the Cross."[2] For this purpose the great faith of St. Paul enabled him to mortify himself—to crucify the flesh. In some degree faith will mean to every soul a union with the Cross, a sharing in the declaration of the Apostle, "I die daily."[3] But faith alone will not suffice; there must be hope of victory. And how shall hope express itself unless in prayer? "For what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?"[4] but what he hath not, that he will ask of God, the Giver of all victories—the God of battles—"Come to us quickly, and save us, and help

[1] Job x. 22 (Vulg.).
[2] Gal. ii. 20 (Vulg.).
[3] 1 Cor. xv. 31.
[4] Rom. viii. 24.

us ; for all the kings of the Amorites that dwell in the mountains are gathered together against us."

Prayer is the voice of hope calling to God for succour. But if faith and hope are needful, how much more is love—the charity of God !

Love is the chief of the three great theological virtues perfecting the soul in union with God. Love is the glad surrender to God of the whole being of man, spiritual and physical. It is the gold that overlays the house of God, binding all together in "the very bond of peace." [1] To aid the soul to offer itself to Him in love God has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ, Who has come forth from God to manifest the Heart of God to the world. The whole force of the Incarnate Life of the Son of God was love. To show this love He lived and died : "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." [2]

If we turn to the Gentile world before the coming of Jesus Christ we find faith in God—or rather in gods —but little hope in God, and still less love for God. For this reason—because the nations knew little of God, and consequently had but little hope or love—the Gentiles were said to be in darkness. In the natural order they had more light than Israel, but as regards the supernatural truths of revelation they were in comparative gloom. The wisest among them looked with Plato for the coming of some Divine Word, Who

[1] Collect for Quinquagesima. [2] St. John xv. 13.

should speak more plainly than their own gods had spoken.

Of these Gentiles the wise men who came from the East to worship Jesus Christ are the representatives. They teach us that the mere subdual of evil is not enough. The senses that may bring destruction must not only be held in check, but actually placed at the feet of God, and enlisted in His willing service. The Old Testament could teach us about the subdual of evil, but it remained for Jesus Christ to call out these powers of the soul, and enlist them by faith, hope, and love in His own service.

In the Old Testament story the rebel kings are utterly destroyed by Joshua. We have seen how, by His Cross and Passion, Jesus Christ has fulfilled this type. In the coming of the kings from the East to worship Him in His Epiphany we are taught a new lesson. God called them from the darkness in order that they might share in His own life, and in His own power by faith, hope, and love; and through His merits learn not only to conquer sin, but to serve God.[1] It seems to us now so natural to see the pilgrim Magi on their way to worship the newly-born Saviour that we forget the struggle there must have been to rise up, leave all, and follow the guiding star. They bear indeed mystical gifts that are emblems of their own

[1] The "three kings"—the Magi—are taken as a type of faith, hope, and charity, the virtues that enable us to subdue the five senses, prefigured by the five Amorite kings.

hardly-followed vocation, as well as of the devotion due to Him they seek. Let us think of the scene, as we may imagine it—the stars shining clearly in the heavens declared the glory of God to many who were strangers to Israel. These stars spoke with silent voices to the wise men who read, as they believed, in the midnight heavens the very revelation of the Unknown God. They may perhaps have heard of, and longed for, the appearance of the "Star" which should arise "out of Jacob."[1] A night came—much as many another—on which they began their watch. They prayed, and waited, stretching out longing hands to heaven; their hearts echoed the cry of the Prophet, "Oh that Thou wouldest rend the heavens, that Thou wouldest come down."[2]

But this night was not to end as others, for, lo! suddenly they see a star more bright, more fair than any they have known before. They are rapt away from the earth; they are "in the spirit." The heavens seem to hold but that one star. In the silence the voice of God speaks to their souls; His grace enlightens their minds, and they know it is "*His* star."[3]

They gaze on, when, behold, the vision changes; the star is no more seen, but the heavens are opening, and where the star had been now they see "a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars."[4]

[1] Num. xxiv. 17.
[2] Isa. lxiv. 1.
[3] St. Matt. ii. 2.
[4] Rev. xii. 1.

". . . in her arms she brings
The Light of all the world, the Christ, the King of kings."

They have seen "His star." The call has come, and they know its meaning; but it is not easy to obey it. Yet the Magi were not "disobedient to the heavenly vision." We need not go through the familiar story recorded in the Holy Gospel, but we can enter with them into the Presence they sought and found. "When they were come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His Mother, and fell down, and worshipped Him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh."[1]

The kings kneel before the true Joshua, subdued by His mighty power. They offer to Him sacred gifts —the gold of love, the incense of faith, and the myrrh of hope. Faith that worships; hope that perseveres; love that perfects. They have left all for His sake; they have learned the lesson of self-surrender. They came from the land of darkness and the shadow of death into the bright light of His Presence. They found Him Whom they sought, and now He sends them back again to their own country by another way. Even so our Lord would have us learn that when we have submitted ourselves to His yoke, and have by His grace brought ourselves into obedience to His law, we have to live a life for Him where

[1] St. Matt. ii. 11.

He has placed us. We are to be in the world, but not of it.

There may still lie before us a continual struggle to keep the mastery over the passions of our fallen nature; but He says to us as Joshua said of old, "Fear not, nor be dismayed, be strong and of good courage."[1] There must be conflict before victory. Let us come then to Him as the wise men came, in willing worship. We *must* one day come into His Presence, for we believe that He will come to be our Judge.

He has come already to be the Saviour and Helper of men—the true Joshua. The Epiphany of Mercy is past. He has won for us by His conquest the power to conquer sin and obtain His gift of eternal life. He has made us "kings and priests unto God,"[2] that we may rule over the kingdom of our own soul, and offer our obedient worship to God. We have, however, to choose whom we will serve—Joshua, or the rebel powers of evil. We must join one of two bands—the hosts led by the five kings of the Amorites, or the pilgrim Magi. We must in any case become the servants of Joshua; only we can choose whether we will come of our own choice into His Presence to offer our gifts and our homage, or whether we will be dragged there to hear our condemnation. The manner of our coming into the Presence of our Lord is left to our own choice. We have power by His grace to come with the kings from the East to worship Him; we have also power

[1] Joshua x. 25. [2] Rev. i. 6.

by our will to reject all voluntary service of Him, but come we must. The Epiphany of Judgment is yet in the future. In that day we shall hear His voice, and we shall stand before Him. We shall either be numbered with wise men, who found in Jesus a Saviour, and who will then hear His voice, saying, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world"; or else we shall be among the rebel hosts of the Amorite kings, who will hear the terrible words of Jesus the Avenger and Judge, "But those Mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before Me."

"Rex tremendæ majestatis,
Qui salvandos salvas gratis
Salva me, fons pietatis.

Recordare, Jesu pie
Quod sum causa tuæ viæ,
Ne me perdas illa die."[1]

[1] "King of majesty tremendous,
Who dost free salvation send us,
Fount of pity! then befriend us.

Think, kind Jesu!—my salvation
Caused Thy wondrous Incarnation;
Leave me not to reprobation!"

PASSAGES FOR READING

(1) Eph. iii. 20. God is *able* and willing to help us in our war against sin.

(2) Heb. vii. 25. He is *able* to save when all seems lost, if only we trust in Him and do our best.

(3) 2 Cor. ix. 8. He is *able* to do this, because He is the Source of all grace and of all help.

(4) Heb. ii. 18. He is *able* to help in time of temptation: but we must ask for His succour. Prayer is a *means* of grace.

(5) Jude 24. He is *able* to uphold those who rely on Him. (Compare with St. Matt. xiv. 30.)

(6) Phil. iii. 21. He is *able* to subdue, and He will subdue, all things to Himself. May we be among those who offer their obedient worship to Him gladly, in Faith, Hope, and Love.

XVI.

SEPTUAGESIMA

Work, a Law of Life

Type

"And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it." (Gen. ii. 15.)

Jesus Christ

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard." (St. Matt. xx. 1.)

The Soul

"I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it?" (Neh. vi. 3.)

XVI.

Work, a Law of Life

ONE of the secrets of a happy life is to have something to do, and to do it. No misery is probably greater than the misery of a thoroughly idle man, who can find no other object in life than to "kill time."

Man, at his best, is a faint and blurred image of the Creator. Man is the work of God—God's noblest work; and into man God breathed the breath of life, and together with it communicated something more than life—the power and the obligation to use that life; in other words, to work. God Himself is the great Worker; man made in His likeness was designed to be in some degree an expression in time of God's eternal activity.

On Septuagesima Sunday the services of the Church are full of the thought of work. The Epistle speaks of the laborious preparation of the Greek athletes for their national games, and argues that the Christian should learn from their example to take equal care to win the incorruptible crown that rewards the victor.[1]

The Gospel is the parable of the labourers, who are

[1] 1 Cor. ix. 24–27.

all sent at different times to work in the vineyard.[1] The labourers do not all work for an equal time, but all receive the same reward.

The First Lesson at Morning Prayer is taken from the opening chapter of the Bible, and recounts the work of God in creation.[2] The Second Lesson is from the last chapter but one of the last book in the Bible, and tells of the "new heaven" and the "new earth"; the Creator is shown as the all-merciful Father, Who "shall wipe away all tears," and remove all cause of grief; "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."[3]

At Evening Prayer the Lessons are from the same books as at Morning Prayer—Genesis and the Revelation of St. John. The First Lesson describes the earthly Paradise in which God "put the man whom He had formed";[4] the Second Lesson pictures in symbolic language "that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God"; it speaks of the Lamb of God as "the Light" of this glorious city, and of the nations of the saved who walk in that light; of the "pure river of water of life"; of "the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits."[5] In this way the earthly Paradise and the heavenly

[1] St. Matt. xx. 1–16.
[2] Gen. i. and ii. to *v.* 4.
[3] Rev. xxi. 1–9.
[4] Gen. ii. *v.* 4 to end.
[5] Rev. xxi. 9 to xxii. 6.

Paradise of God are linked together as the work of the Most Holy Trinity.

It would seem as if the Church desired to bring before us to-day the work of God as He designed it and as it will be hereafter, to show us God justified in His works, overruling all things and bringing all creation back to Himself, the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and Ending.

I.

We usually attribute works of power to the Father, works of mercy to the Son, works of grace to the Holy Spirit. The Father is especially called the "Almighty," the "Creator of heaven and earth." We must, however, remember that these distinctions are made rather for the sake of our finite minds than because of any variation in the Nature of the Deity, or any absolute separation between the works of one Person of the Holy Trinity and another Person. The Three Divine Persons have but one Divine Nature—"there are not three Gods, but one God"—and therefore we must be watchful against "confounding the Persons" or "dividing the Substance." In this way the Son and the Holy Spirit are both as "Almighty" as the Father, "and yet they are not three Almighties, but one Almighty."

The Holy Trinity, therefore, created the world. St. John writes of the Son that "without Him was not anything made that was made"; and again, "the

world was made by Him."[1] In the Book of Genesis we read also of the work of the Third Person in creation: "The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."[2] The unfathomable mystery of the Unity of God and the Trinity of Persons is entirely beyond our power to explain or understand. The Creeds guard against certain errors that destroy the revelation of God as to His Being, and propose explicitly certain truths that are involved in the revelation — and that is all. We can only humble ourselves in the presence of the Infinite: the attitude in which alone we can fitly draw near to the Burning Bush is one of adoration. We hear again the voice of God warning off the too eager and familiar approach of man: "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground."[3] With some such idea as this the Athanasian Creed teaches that "the Unity in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity is to be *worshipped*"; and that "the Catholic faith is this, That we *worship* one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity."

All the exterior works of God—that is, everything with the exception of that which constitutes the distinction of Persons one from another, or everything except the Procession one from the other—are common to all the Three Divine Persons.

Another point we must be clear about is this, that work does not imply labour or effort, or bring with

[1] St. John i. 3, 10. [2] Gen. i. 2. [3] Exod. iii. 5.

it fatigue, except in the case of fallen humanity. God is ever working, yet never weary. When, then, we read of all the six days' work when God created the heavens and the earth, the idea must not be too closely associated with work as we understand the term. God spake, and it was done. Fatigue is separable from work, and although it is said God "rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made,"[1] there is nothing more taught us than the completion of the work of creation, and its correspondence with the idea of God in calling the world into existence. The Holy Scriptures express the deep things of God—truths that lie far out of our finite understanding—in such language as will best convey to us something of the truth. In our own experience we often fail to put into words what we feel and know; that is to say, our words do not convey to others all that we desire to express. This is, of course, far more true of things in the supernatural order, of which we have no kind of actual experience at all. But, allowing for this, the idea conveyed to us by the word "work" and by the word "rest" is the nearest approach we can make to an idea of the activity and repose that are contained in the thought of God.

God not only worked in creation, but by His providence He is ever working for our good. He watches, He neither slumbers nor sleeps—in the sense that He

[1] Gen. ii. 2.

is never unconscious of the needs of His creatures. "The eyes of the Lord are in every place";[1] by His own omniscience, by the ministry of His Angels, and by all the ordained instruments of His will, He protects His creatures.

The Old Testament is one long record of God working for His people and preparing the world for the coming of the fulness of grace and truth through Jesus Christ His Son.

During many ages the earth was prepared for the crowning work of God—the creation of man. For four thousand years after his creation and fall from God, the world was prepared for the coming of the Redeemer. Jesus Christ is the completion of the work designed by God when He said, "Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness."[2] Jesus Christ is a new creation. He was "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh . . . but of God."[3] In other words, He was "conceived by the Holy Ghost."

When, at the close of the "sixth day" of creation, God looked upon the first man, He saw a work that He could say was "very good."

When at the appointed time the Second Adam was to enter upon His ministry, God again approved of His work. "This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased."[4] The coming of the Son of God in human form did but intensify the lesson that God

[1] Prov. xv. 3.
[2] Gen. i. 26.
[3] St. John i. 13.
[4] St. Matt. iii. 17.

had been teaching from the beginning as to the sanctity of work.

Our Lord's first recorded words give the clue to the whole of His life, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?"[1] He said to those who questioned Him, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me";[2] and again, "I must work the works of Him that sent Me."[3]

The time had come when the Father was especially to work through the Son. When the Jews cavilled at His works our Lord told them plainly that they were rejecting the work of God; "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."[4] When the Jews took up stones to stone Him, Jesus answered, "Many good works have I showed you from My Father; for which of those works do ye stone Me?"[5] His first recorded words as a Boy had reference to His "Father's business"; when all was over, and the last drop of the bitter cup of the Passion had been drained, He could look back upon His life, so full of this work that had been given Him by His Father, and say, "It is finished."[6]

He had gone about preaching and teaching; He had healed the sick, raised the dead, comforted the sorrowful, given hope to the faint-hearted; and now He has given His life for the world; He has purchased the kingdoms of the earth, not with silver and gold, but with the last drops of the Precious Blood. He has

[1] St. Luke ii. 49. [2] St. John iv. 34. [3] St. John ix. 4.
[4] St. John v. 17. [5] St. John x. 32. [6] St. John xix. 30.

redeemed souls from the power of sin, and from the dominion of death; He can say, as He commends His spirit to His Father: "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do";[1] it is all accomplished; "It is finished."

And yet even now He has a further work to do. Before His Incarnation, the Father had especially worked: "My Father worketh hitherto." During the three-and-thirty years we have in a special way the works of the Son. Our Lord taught this when He added to the words, "My Father worketh hitherto," the assertion, "I work." From Pentecost the Father and the Son were to carry on their work by the Mission of the Holy Spirit. "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, Whom the Father will send in My Name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."[2]

We are living then under the special guidance of the Holy Ghost. The Church is the mystical Body of Christ, and like His natural Body is the work of the Holy Ghost. The work of the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity is the work of sanctification—of grace. He inspired the written word of God in Holy Scripture; He inspires the living Church of God; He is the Breath of Life in the mystical Body. Every Sacrament that is administered, every prayer that is effectually offered, every grace that is imparted owes its virtue to the Holy Spirit. From the moment we are brought to the font,

[1] St. John xvii. 4. [2] St. John xiv. 26.

until the last Sacrament seals the soul for eternity, we are dependent upon the Holy Spirit. He imparts the merits of the Cross and Passion through the ordained channels of grace; He leads the soul—He is the supreme Director; He takes of the things of God and makes them ours; He refashions the fallen man into the image and likeness of God made known in Jesus Christ. "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."[1]

The activity—the ceaseless work—of God the Holy Ghost is therefore no less than the activity of the Father and the Son. The joy of God is indeed in His works; and all His works praise Him, for all are full of mercy and loving-kindness.

II.

Since, then, God is revealed to us as ever working, it is not surprising that man, made after His image, should find happiness also in work.

Work is, therefore, the law of our eternal as well as of our temporal welfare. In the Judgment God will "render to every man according to his deeds."[2] Our Lord made this quite plain when He said: "Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven."[3]

[1] 2 Cor. iii. 18. [2] Rom. ii. 6. [3] St. Matt. vii. 21.

The Son of Man has come to give everyone a call to His service: "Why stand ye here all the day idle?"[1] is the question He asks. None can now reply, as they might perhaps before, "Because no man hath hired us."[2] A Man has not only hired us, but bought us with His own Blood, to do His own work, which is happily the only work that can bring us peace of soul here and hereafter. He asks us to work out not *His* but *our* salvation.

It is evident, however, that work may be done for various motives, and it cannot be that all works, not in themselves wrong—as opposed to the character of God—are, in the Scriptural sense of the word, good works. A man may, as St. Paul teaches in the Epistle to the Corinthians,[3] do many works that are in themselves useful, and even religious, and yet lose all reward.

A man may do the noblest works for mean motives. He may build hospitals, or nurse the sick, or tend and relieve the poor, simply to win praise or satisfy the desire he has, in a heart naturally kind, to help others and relieve misery. Such a man may be an atheist, who would himself say he sought no reward beyond that which would necessarily be reaped from the nature of the work performed. Such work is to be valued indeed, and it has its reward—the reward sought. It was not done for a supernatural motive; it will not, therefore, expect a supernatural reward. Even of the Pharisees, who did good works for a contemptible

[1] St. Matt. xx. 6. [2] St. Matt. xx. 7. [3] 1 Cor. xiii. 1–3.

motive, our Lord said, "They have their reward."[1] How much more, then, have they their reward who, from real kindness and brotherly love, do good deeds? They have the satisfaction of knowing that they have helped to brighten dark lives, to relieve suffering and distress: they have the reward of the blessing of the multitude they have succoured; and they have also (what quite possibly they have *not* sought) the praise of men, and many graces from God to lead them to Himself. It is, indeed, not likely that the man who habitually loves his neighbour, and seeks his good, will in the end fall short of some love for God. All unknowingly he does for Christ what he does for the least of Christ's brethren; and this will, we may hope, bring further light, more grace, until here or hereafter the dim light will brighten into faith. To Cornelius it was said: "Thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God."[2] It may be that the prayers of the poor who are helped by the alms of those who have benevolence without faith will gain for them knowledge of the truth.

For a work to be "good" in the sense of being pleasing to God and meritorious, it must be a work that is done (1) according to the will of God, (2) by the grace of God, (3) in order to serve God. All we do in our daily calling, therefore, may be done to the glory of God. It is not only pious works that are good works, but "whatsoever" we do in the Name of the

[1] St. Matt. vi. 2. [2] Acts x. 31.

Lord Jesus, according to the will of God and by the grace of God. "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him."[1] The real secret of a good work lies in its being done under these conditions. Whatever be our state of life, provided it be not inconsistent with the law of God, we have the satisfaction of knowing it is our vocation, our work given us to do by God; and all that we have to do in it is therefore His will. If we perform these actions in His grace, and with the intention of doing them for Him, they are good works, whether they be in themselves secular or religious.

On the other hand all works, secular or religious, that are done without thought of, or reference to God, and without our being in the grace of God, are "dead works."[2]

The call of God to work in His vineyard comes to all men. It was given to us at our Baptism. If we have hitherto rejected it and refused to obey the Divine vocation, let us remember that it is now again sounding in our ears. Every inspiration, every stirring of conscience, bears to our soul the question, "Why stand ye here all the day idle?" Let us beware how we trifle with this call of God, how we resist His Spirit. He has said, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man."[3] The time may come when He will make His voice no longer to be heard. The call

[1] Col. iii. 17. [2] Heb. ix. 14. [3] Gen. vi. 3.

of God came to Felix when St. Paul preached before him. He heard it, but delayed to obey; it was not then convenient. It would mean the breaking away from evil habits and evil associations, and this was hard to do; he desired to enjoy his sinful pleasure a little longer. "Go thy way," he said to the Apostle, "for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee."[1] He seemed to forget that he might send for St. Paul, and St. Paul might preach to him; but he could not, if he wilfully rejected the present call of God, be sure that he could, at his pleasure and when it was "convenient," send for the Holy Spirit to bring home the apostolic message to his soul. We do not read that the "convenient season" ever came. Many men act thus, but all that God has said is that "*now* is the accepted time; *now* is the day of salvation."[2] Now, when the voice is heard; now, when the conscience is stirred, "quench not the Spirit,"[3] lest He withdraw, and be no more heard. "Then shall they cry unto the Lord, but He will not hear them: He will even hide His face from them at that time, as they have behaved themselves ill in their doings."[4]

Septuagesima is therefore a call to follow God—to be fellow-workers with Him. He calls us all into the vineyard with the command, "Work out your own salvation."[5] Let us follow the Divine Master, and

[1] Acts xxiv. 25. [2] 2 Cor. vi. 2. [3] 1 Thess. v. 19.
[4] Micah iii. 4. [5] Phil. ii. 12.

make His words our own: "I must work the works of Him that sent Me while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work."[1]

PASSAGES FOR READING

(1) Tobit xii. 12. The story of Tobit is a record of the way in which good deeds win a blessing from God. (*Cf.* St. James ii. 26.)

(2) St. Matthew x. 42. If we can give more than the very little figured by a cup of water we should do so; but we are taught here that it is not the gift but the good will and intention that are pleasing to God.

(3) St. Matthew xxv. 21. All who obey the call of God, and work in obedience to Him, will receive His reward.

Here, again, it is not the quantity of work, or the length of time occupied in work, that is rewarded; but such work, and for so long, as God commands.

(4) Jonah iii. 10. The story of the Ninevites turning to God in works of penance, and so obtaining grace, is an encouragement to repentance. (*Cf.* St. Luke xi. 30.)

(5) Acts x. 4. Prayer, fasting, and almsdeeds are all means of grace if used in a right spirit.

(6) St. Matthew vi. 1, 5, 16. Our Lord takes it equally for granted that His disciples will fast and give alms, as that they will pray. Prayer, fasting, and almsgiving are called the three notable good works. (*Cf.* 1 Cor. xiii.)

[1] St. John ix. 4.

XVII.

SEXAGESIMA

The Mystery of the Serpent

Prophecy

"There was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon. . . . And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." (Rev. xii. 7, 9.)

Jesus Christ

"I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." (St. Luke x. 18.)

The Soul

"Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. xv. 57.)

XVII.

The Mystery of the Serpent

WE have already seen that "evil is the privation of good, and not its mere negation"; that evil in a creature is the absence of some good that was designed by God for that creature in its creation. This conclusion was needful unless we were to attribute the creation of evil to God; but inasmuch as the very idea of God implies that He is good, all that owes its existence to Him must also be good. There can be but one Infinite Being, hence every other being is finite, and owes its existence to God, the Creator of all things visible and invisible. It follows that no being can therefore be in itself absolutely and entirely evil. At the worst it will retain so much of good as belongs to it as a creature of God.

Holy Scripture, from the first pages of Genesis to the last chapter of the Revelation of St. John, makes frequent mention of an Evil One. He is called by many names—the Devil, the Deceiver, Satan, the Serpent, etc.—but throughout Holy Writ he appears as the adversary of God and the foe of man. His aim is to thwart God's plans for the happiness of His creatures, and bring them to misery and ruin.

In trying to learn the origin of this Evil One, we shall necessarily find that he is a fallen being, one who, as a creature of God, was originally "very good."

The origin of his fall is indeed nowhere clearly revealed to us, but by a careful consideration of some passages of Holy Scripture we may perhaps penetrate a little way into the mystery.

Just as in the parable of the Tares we are told that "the enemy that sowed them is the devil,"[1] so in the parable of the Sower (which is read as the Gospel for Sexagesima) our Lord tells His disciples that it is the same wicked one who hinders the good seed from becoming fruitful: "Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the wayside are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved."[2]

I.

We gather from the Holy Scriptures that at some period before the creation of man God had called the holy angels into existence. These spiritual intelligences represent creation in its nearest approach to God.

Christian tradition teaches that the angels were endowed with free will, and that before their final confirmation in good they were placed upon their trial, or probation. Lucifer, an archangel, rebelled against God, and drew away with him other angels. Lucifer

[1] St. Matt. xiii. 39. [2] St. Luke viii. 12.

and "his angels" were then driven from heaven. The passages of Holy Scripture which speak of this "fall of the angels" are, necessarily perhaps, figurative in their language. They certainly present many difficulties in their interpretation.

In the book of the Revelation of St. John we read that at some period "there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him."[1]

In reading these words we must remember the nature of the vision that runs through the whole of the Revelation of St. John. It is a vision that includes all time and opens up eternity. Just as it discloses Him Who is the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End, even so it goes back to the beginning and on to the end.

We cannot fail to notice that in the early part of this chapter there is recorded the appearance of "a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars . . . and she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron."[2] Now in Psalm ii. we have a prophecy of

[1] Rev. xii. 7-9. [2] Rev. xii. 1, 5.

the coming of Christ's kingdom, and in this Psalm the conquest of the nations is described thus: "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron."[1] In the Messianic Psalm, cx., it is said: "The Lord shall send the rod of Thy strength out of Zion: rule Thou in the midst of Thine enemies."[2] Again, when St. John sees Him Whose "name is called the Word of God," he beholds Him as One out of Whose mouth "goeth a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations; and He shall rule them with a rod of iron."[3]

Mysterious, then, as the language of the Apocalypse is, it seems highly probable that "the woman"—the mother of the "man child"—is the Virgin Mother of the Man, Christ Jesus.

It is abundantly clear that the "war in heaven" was connected with this appearance of the Mother and Child, that is to say, with the mystery of the Incarnation; and in connection with some hostility to this mystery there is revealed to us the warfare, the defeat, and the expulsion of Satan from heaven.

Before we go further we have to consider what this may tell us of the fall of the angels.

St. Thomas, writing as to the possibility of sin in the angels, says, "An angel, like any other reasonable creature, if we consider his nature as such, can sin. If a creature existed who could not sin, this would be the result not of its nature, but of grace. For sin is nothing else than the turning from that rectitude

[1] Ps. ii. 9. [2] Ps. cx. 2. [3] Rev. xix. 15.

of action that is proper in the creature. . . . Every created will can, by nature, sin (*in qualibet autem voluntate creaturæ potest esse peccatum secundum conditionem suæ naturæ*)." [1]

It would seem, then, that after the creation of the angels, God revealed to them the future mystery of the Incarnation, and called upon the angels to adore the Incarnate God. Before "Jesus, Who was made a little lower than the angels," [2] in that the material body of man is a lower form of creation than the pure, spiritual nature of the angels, the hosts of heaven were called to humble themselves: "When He bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, He saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him." [3]

God designed a union for His Eternal Son with the lower nature of man, passing over a union with the angelic nature: "He took not on Him the nature of angels, but He took on Him the seed of Abraham." [4] We have reason to suppose that in some way the thought of pride entered into the pure intelligence of Lucifer, and he desired for himself the great dignity that was ordained for man. He desired the hypostatic union for himself, and refused to bow before the human nature, which is a little lower than the nature of the angels.

St. Thomas quotes the prophet Isaiah to show that pride was the sin of Lucifer, who desired to be as God.

[1] *Summa Theo.*, pars. i. q. lxiii. a. 1.
[2] Heb. ii. 9. [3] Heb. i 6. [4] Heb. ii. 16.

"How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! . . . For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God . . . I will be like the Most High!"[1] St. Thomas adds, "The angel undoubtedly sinned in desiring to be as God," and Suarez thinks that "probably Lucifer sinned by pride in desiring the hypostatic union, and thus from the first became the adversary of Christ: (*probabiliter Lucifer revera peccavit per superbiam appetendo sibi unionem hypostaticam, et sic a principio fuit Christi adversarius.*)"[2] Thus Lucifer sinned by pride, and also (Suarez thinks) through envy, since he coveted the glory reserved for humanity through its being taken up into God by the Incarnation —"*Lucifer invidet naturæ humanæ gratiam unionis hypostaticæ.*" Lucifer not only desired this union, but he coveted it for a wrong motive. He desired that he himself might "rule the nations," and receive the worship of mankind. But to none of the angels did God say, "Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee."[3]

This refusal of Lucifer to adore the God-Man led to "war in heaven." The archangel Michael, as chief of the "angels of God," raised the battle cry, "Who is like God?" and drove Lucifer and "his angels" from heaven.

Whether or no this is the true explanation of the

[1] Isa. xiv. 12–14. [2] *Opera Omnia*, tom. ii., lib. vii. 13, 18.
[3] Heb. i. 5.

fall of the angels, certainly there is further proof in Holy Scripture that pride was the cause of their fall. In Ecclesiasticus pride is said to be "the beginning of sin"; and again, "the beginning of pride is when one departeth from God, and his heart is turned away from his Maker";[1] and throughout Holy Writ pride is especially noted as hateful to God. St. Paul writes as if there were no question that pride led to the fall of Lucifer. A bishop must, he writes, not be a novice, "lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil."[2] The words above quoted from Ecclesiasticus are especially noteworthy when compared with those of Job, His angels "He charged with folly."[3] The Septuagint uses the word σκολιόν for "folly," and σκολιόν is a deviation, a turning from rectitude. The same word is used by St. Luke for "crooked" in the passage — "The crooked shall be made straight";[4] in the Acts of the Apostles the word occurs with the meaning "untoward," "Save yourselves from this untoward generation";[5] again, it is used for the "froward"—"Servants, be subject to your masters: not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward."[6] This turning aside of some of the angels from the will of God is also referred to by St. Peter, who tells us that "God spared not the angels that sinned;"[7] and St. Jude writes of "the angels which kept not their first estate.[8] We have, then, abundant Scriptural proof that Lucifer and

[1] Ecclus. x. 12, 13. [2] 1 Tim. iii. 6. [3] Job iv. 18. [4] Isa. xl. 4.
[5] Acts ii. 40. [6] 1 Peter ii. 18. [7] 2 Peter ii. 4. [8] Jude 6.

his angels sinned and were driven from heaven. We have also sufficient ground in Holy Writ for the tradition that the sin was pride and envy; that the dignity God designed for man in the Incarnation was the occasion of the "war in heaven," and the expulsion of the rebel angels with their chief. This is the first trace of the origin of evil that we can find in Holy Scripture. There is absolutely, however, no explanation of the mystery as to how the angelic intelligence came to choose evil.

When we turn from the fall of the angels to the fall of man, we find some very noticeable confirmation of the tradition as to the sin of the angels. We have seen in the Revelation of St. John the war, and the expulsion from heaven of "that old serpent, called also the devil and Satan." Filled with rebellious anger against God, the "serpent" (*i.e.* Lucifer) is "cast out into the earth." He has in his mind the heavenly vision of the Woman and her Child. "Having great wrath,"[1] we may well suppose his one desire will be to ruin humanity if he can by any means do so. In this he would, as it were, revenge himself at once against the nature that had caused his pride to rebel; and, moreover, he might hope even to thwart God, Whose creatures he would stir up to a rebellion similar to his own.

We open the Book of Genesis, and are almost at the first brought face to face with a mysterious being called "the serpent," and we find him endeavouring to

[1] Rev. xii. 12.

persuade "the woman" to distrust and disobey God. "Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened; and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."[1] There have, of course, been very many and contradictory interpretations of these words. It would require a special treatise to go at all thoroughly into the various arguments as to the mystic figure here introduced as "the serpent,"[2] but a careful consideration of the

[1] Gen. iii. 1–5.

[2] The symbol of the serpent is almost universal in all the religions of antiquity. The great wisdom with which the serpent is credited is sufficient to explain his connection with the gods of wisdom, and healing, and the arts in ancient Greece, Rome, and Egypt. Apollo, Athene, Dionysus, Hermes, Demeter, and Asclepius, among other deities, were all distinguished by the symbol of the serpent. Apollo, it is true, destroyed Python, but the Pythian Priestess, the Dracontic tripod, and the living serpents which were kept in the *adytum* of the temple were retained. In the great Mysteries at Eleusis, a basket of serpents was introduced. Indeed the history of the place given to the serpent in the religions of antiquity forms a literature in itself. In the post-Apostolic age, the Orphites introduced serpent-worship as the symbol of the knowledge of good and evil. The serpent was brought into the Holy Mysteries to "hallow" the Eucharist St. Augustine, writing of this detestable sect,

theories advanced leads to the conclusion that the serpent is none other than that fallen angel, "called also the devil and Satan." He is emphatically also "The Deceiver."

Eve was perhaps familiar with the existence and appearance of the angels, and most probably had no knowledge of the fall of any of their number, since she had no "knowledge of evil." It seems extremely unlikely that Eve could in her unfallen state have been led to disobey and distrust God through any manœuvres of a mere reptile, and still more unlikely that a miraculous gift of speech (in itself alarming) would be granted to such a reptile for so evil a purpose. The difficulties are comparatively few if we understand "the devil" to be spoken of as "the serpent"; not that Satan took the form of a serpent, but that he made use of a serpent as the tempter.

First, we notice the kind of temptation—to "be as gods," the ambition of pride, and the desire of what God has forbidden. Do we not see in this temptation the tempter trying to lead Eve into the same presumptuous sins that had been the cause of his own

says that "certain believed that the serpent who seduced Adam and Eve was Jesus Christ. But all the ancients agree that they (the Orphites) fed a serpent or snake, which they used to tame, and that they caused it to come forth from the cavern where it lay hid, at the time when they wished to celebrate their wretched and mock Eucharist, and that they made it, by their incantations, come upon the table on which they were celebrating, in order that it might lick up their offerings and might coil round them: after which they used to break them to be their Eucharist, sanctified by the Serpent Christ."

fall? The serpent beguiled Eve, and she persuaded her husband to sin also. Thus they who had before known only good now came to know good and evil. Hardly have the unhappy pair realised their mistake, than they stand, ashamed, in the presence of God for judgment. The Creator thus met the representatives of His fallen creatures, angelic and human. The punishment that had already overtaken Lucifer is increased, and the man and woman are instructed that the consequence of their sin will be the knowledge of sorrow, pain, and death.

Thus came sin and death—not from God, but from the choice of man, "for God created man to be immortal, and made him to be an image of His own eternity. Nevertheless, through envy of the devil came death into the world."[1]

We turn now to the words of the last part of the twelfth chapter of the Revelation of St. John: "And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child."[2] May it not be that here, and in the rest of the chapter, we have a twofold persecution; first, of "the woman" in Paradise as the visible representative of the vision seen in heaven—as the forerunner of the woman who should give birth to the man child—and then *the* Woman and *the* Seed, Mary and her Son? We are familiar with the way in which the prophecy of the

[1] Wisdom ii. 24. [2] Rev. xii. 13.

temporal fall of Jerusalem is mixed up in prophecy and in the Gospels with prophecies of the second coming of our Lord to judge the world, so that we may not be wrong in finding here also two persecutions—one connected with the Fall, and the other with the Redemption. We have, without doubt, a similar combination of ideas in those words of Genesis, where the immediate punishment of the first Adam is joined with the promise of the deliverance to be wrought by the Second Adam.

The persecution of Eve, as the mother of all living, would then be referred to by the words in Revelation xii. 13. The words that follow: "And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ,"[1] would tell of the persecution of Jesus Christ and the elect.

Our Lord seems to teach that the devil was the cause of the fall of Adam and Eve, when He rebuked the Pharisees with these words: "Ye are of your father the devil. . . . He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it."[2]

Again, when the seventy returned to our Lord, they came, we are told, with joy, saying, "Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through Thy Name. And

[1] Rev. xii. 17. [2] St. John viii. 44.

He said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy."[1] Here we have not only a reference to some fall of Satan from heaven, but immediately following is the mention of "serpents and scorpions, and all the power of the enemy."

In tracing the origin, then, of evil, we find in Holy Scripture the first indication of its existence is among the angels. Its first coming into this world is connected with the mystic serpent, who is either Satan himself, or Satan transformed into, or Satan making a medium of, a beast of the field. It seems, however, on the whole, that neither the pride that rebelled against God, nor the requirements of the temptation of Eve would allow the fallen angel to disguise himself in a nature below that of man, and transform himself into a mere reptile, a literal beast of the field.

We have, therefore, to find an explanation for the fact that in Genesis and elsewhere Satan is called "the serpent," and yet "the serpent" is spoken of as "more subtil than any *beast of the field* which the Lord God had made."

From these words we should naturally understand that the serpent spoken of is a literal reptile, and not merely the title of a spiritual fallen being.

The curse, moreover (*v.* 14) certainly supports this

[1] St. Luke x. 19.

idea. If the serpent is said to be "more subtil than any beast of the field," so he is here "cursed above all cattle and above every beast of the field": he is to go upon his belly and eat dust all the days of his life. There is also in the words that follow much that seems to connect the figurative with the literal enmity between the serpent and the human race. Of the seed of the woman it is said: "It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel"—words that, whatever their figurative significance may be, certainly suggest the idea of man unawares treading on the reptile, and bruising its head in so doing, while in self-defence the snake wounds his heel with its venomous bite.

Putting aside the theory that Satan himself took the form of a serpent, we pass to the other interpretation, already mentioned, of the story of this primal temptation, and the fall of man.

It may have been that the spiritual nature of the fallen angel could not communicate with Eve except through the material world.

The angelic nature cannot, as far as we know, bring itself within the cognizance of the human senses. As the human race consisted in the single pair—Adam and Eve—and they were at the time unfallen, it was impossible to tempt them from within. The temptation must therefore come from without, and could apparently only be presented through the agency of the material world with which the body of man placed him in contact. This being so, Satan (the fallen archangel)

chose the serpent for his means—or medium—of communication. He could not choose a human appearance, for no human being was then subject to him. The serpent, by its bodily subtlety, appeared perhaps the most fitting medium; it has power to insinuate itself even into the least likely hiding places. It can conceal itself among the boughs of the trees, or lie hidden in the grass. The subtlety of its body led the ancients to have a great belief in its wisdom. Satan then, being unable to use a human form for his medium, chose the highest form of creation that lay within his reach, and from the brutes, who share with man a sensitive soul as well as a body, he selected the serpent as the most symbolical of his own subtlety.

Josephus and others suppose that, before the fall, the brutes were gifted with a power of communication with man. "All the living creatures," he says, "had one language." Of this, of course, nothing can be known, only supposing it were so, it would account for the fact that Eve should have listened apparently without fear or surprise to the voice of the tempter. Taking the serpent then as a "beast of the field," used by Satan as the medium of communication between himself and humanity, we can understand the universal adoption of the serpent as the symbol of the knowledge of good and evil found everywhere in antiquity. From the first the desire of Satan is to draw worship to himself—he is the adversary of Christ—the Anti-Christ. His symbol is not unfitly associated with religions that gave to

demons the worship due to God. The Apostle St. Paul declared that the malice in the act of Christians partaking of the food offered to idols, lay not in the fact that the idol was anything in itself, but that "the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God." St. Paul continues, "I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils."[1]

Dr. Kalisch finds a difficulty in the fact that the curse fell apparently upon the serpent, not upon Satan; "it would be," he says, "entirely at variance with the Divine justice for ever to curse the animal whose shape it had pleased the evil one to assume." Dr. Kalisch is here, however, taking for granted that the actual serpent was not used as a medium of temptation, but that Satan took the form of a serpent.

If the fact of the serpent being used as a medium still makes it seem an injustice that a curse should fall upon it, we can only say that all creation is represented as sharing in the curse of the fall—even the ground is "cursed for thy sake."

The curse, however, consisted probably more in the eternal symbolic association of the serpent with the Evil One, than in the fact that it moves along the ground upon its belly, and that its food is tainted with the dust of the ground. Dr. Kalisch says, "The serpent was used as an emblem of the evil principle (*sic*), of the spirit of disobedience and contumacy." He then gives some exceptions. We have already referred to these,

[1] 1 Cor. x. 20.

but there is one very notable instance in Holy Scripture, where the symbol of the serpent is used as a type of salvation. Moses, by the direction of God, made a brazen serpent, and they who were bitten in the plague of serpents, upon looking to the brazen serpent on the pole were healed.[1]

Our Lord uses this as a type of His own Passion: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up."[2]

We have here to remember that the serpents destroying Israel are a type of sin, and that our Lord was "made . . . sin for us,"[3] and Himself "bare our sins in His own body on the Tree."[4] As the Sin-Bearer He suffered the penalty of sin—the curse fell upon Him. The serpent bruised His heel, but in the moment of its seeming victory its own head was crushed: "Having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it,"[5] *i.e.*, triumphing over them in His body.

Just before His Passion He had said, "This is your hour, and the power of darkness."[6] His wrestling has been fierce, not against flesh and blood only, but "against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high (or heavenly) places,"[7] against all the hosts of the Evil One; but He has "trodden down

[1] Num. xxi. 9. [2] St. John iii. 14. [3] 2 Cor. v. 21.
[4] 1 Peter ii. 24. [5] Col. ii. 15. [6] St. Luke xxii. 53.
[7] Eph. vi. 12.

strength,"[1] and, though wounded and bruised, He comes out of the fight as conqueror, and by His very wounds and stripes we are healed.

II.

We have now traced "the serpent" back to his first home, and we find that the name, for symbolic reasons, has been transferred from the subtle beast of the field to that fallen angelic intelligence who used the creature of God as his medium of temptation.

Satan is himself the supreme example of the truth that evil is not a creation of God, but consists in the corruption of that good which He designed in the creation of His creature. In the rational order of creatures evil is "when one departeth from God, and his heart is turned away from his Maker."

The higher the intelligence, the lower and more irreparable becomes the fall.

To fallen man has come the hope of a return to God in Jesus Christ. But to every man is given a free will; he can be converted, or he can defy God and perish. "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."[2]

For the Evil One, that "old serpent, called also the

[1] Judges v. 21. [2] Isa. lv. 6, 7.

devil and Satan," there is no revelation given to us that he will ever turn to God. His ruin and that of his angels seems to be final: "The angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, He hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day."[1]

> "From the black, the dull despair,
> Ruined men and angels share,
> From the dread companions there:
> Save us, Holy Jesu."

Some have thought that, after "the judgment of the great day," these rebel angels will be utterly destroyed, and cease to exist. Again, we can only say we cannot tell. The lot of the finally reprobate is one of the mysteries we cannot dogmatise about. All we know is that the curse shall be done away, all evil be rooted out of the kingdom of God, and the triumph of the Seed of the woman be confessed: "He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For He hath put all things under His feet. But when He saith all things are put under Him, it is manifest that He is excepted, which did put all things under Him. And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all."[2]

[1] Jude 6. [2] 1 Cor. xv. 25–28.

PASSAGES FOR READING.

(1) Rev. xii. 7–9. Evil originated in heaven! Those who sinned were cast out: no evil one ever has been, or ever shall be admitted into heaven. (See Rev. xxi. 27.) We learn that the least likely may fall from God—the holiest must "take heed," must "watch and pray," lest they enter into temptation and fall. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

(2) Gen. iii. 1–6. The devil insinuates doubts as to the goodness of God, and the sinfulness of disobedience; then he works through the senses to complete our ruin.

(3) Gen. iii. 8, 9. The man who has inwardly departed from God seeks to avoid God; keeps away from His presence, His house, His priests, His means of grace. But God calls to him, and he *must* come (for pardon, or for judgment) now, or at the hour of death.

(4) Gen. iii. 12. No excuses avail with God. He *knows* the truth.

(5) Gen. iii. 16–19. Even when sin is pardoned we have to bear the temporal consequences of it—the sting of conscience, and sometimes loss of reputation, health, fortune, and friends. David was pardoned, but his child died.

(6) Rev. xii. 10. By His Cross and Passion our Lord has redeemed us from the eternal guilt of sin. He has left us in His Sacraments the Precious Blood to cleanse us from the stain of sin, and strengthen us to overcome it. In Eden man was overcome of evil by taking the forbidden fruit. The promise is: to "him that overcometh" evil "will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.

XVIII.

QUINQUAGESIMA

Worthy Fruits of Penance

Type

"Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey; and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown. So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. . . . And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that He had said that He would do unto them: and He did it not." (Jonah iii. 4, 5, 10.)

Jesus Christ

"The days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days."
(St. Luke v. 35.)

The Soul

"Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." (2 Cor. iv. 17.)

XVIII.

Worthy Fruits of Penance[1]

Welcome, dear feast of Lent! who loves not thee,
He loves not temperance or authority,
But is a child of passion.
The Scriptures bid us fast: the Church says, "Now
Give to thy mother what thou wouldst allow
To every corporation."—GEORGE HERBERT.

NEXT Wednesday the Church enters upon the Lenten Season. There is something very remarkable in the observances of Lent.

The Church calls us together; prescribes for us through forty days a plain and scanty diet; summons us frequently and at unusual hours to public prayer; strips her altars of their ornaments and drapes them in violet; banishes songs of joy from her services; and preaches to us the most solemn and awakening truths of the Gospel. Why does she do this? Nothing has happened in the external world to account for it. No, she has done it for a motive of her own. The thought which has impelled her is a fundamental one, for the institution of Lent goes far back to the early days of Christianity, and each year it has been

[1] Some thoughts in this "reading" are borrowed from *Paulist Sermons.*

observed by the Christian Church throughout the world. What, then, does she mean by an observance so strange, so prolonged, and so exacting? The answer is contained in one word—Penance. Penance is the meaning of Lent; a rough thing; a thing from which we naturally shrink; but which faith tells us to be holy, necessary, salutary, and which the Saints speak of as even pleasant. It is suffering borne for the love of Christ; it is the taking up of our cross—the bearing of the yoke of our Divine Master.

We read in the Commination Service for Ash Wednesday that "in the Primitive Church there was a godly discipline, that, at the beginning of Lent," certain persons "were put to open penance, and punished in this world, that their souls might be saved in the day of the Lord"; and further on we are urged to "return unto the Lord with all contrition and meekness of heart: bewailing and lamenting our sinful life, acknowledging and confessing our offences, and *seeking to bring forth worthy fruits of penance*."

The words of the Book of Common Prayer teach us what Penance is and whence it flows.

What, then, is Penance? It is a hatred of sin—not hatred of sin in the abstract, but of *our* sins; hatred of the evil chains which we made when we put the creature before the Creator; or when we served God with an imperfect and divided heart. It is a hatred of these things, and a feeling that we deserve punishment for them.

Such a feeling is not unnatural to man. Even men who are living evidently sinful lives, and who have no serious idea of reform, sometimes feel touches of it. The fire of passion cannot always burn; sometimes it is allayed; and then—what moments of compunction, of gentle feelings, of self-contempt at the state of slavery to which these passions have reduced them! Such transient emotions cannot indeed procure the reconciliation of the sinner with God, because they involve no real repentance, but they are not altogether to be despised, for they often dispose him to conversion; they are the first impressions of grace; and they show that reason, and conscience, and the capacity for good, are not yet dead in him.

This spirit of penance, which is natural to the human heart, is greatly increased by Christianity, because in the death of Christ on the Cross we see so plainly how much sin ought to be hated, and how great is the punishment it deserves. Now when the Catholic Church says it is necessary to do penance, it means it is necessary to cultivate this spirit. Some persons seem to imagine that the Church means it is enough if a man perform certain external works; if he fast, or pray, without any regard to the motive from which these actions spring. There could not possibly be a greater misunderstanding of the Christian doctrine. We are taught that external acts are of no value whatever, apart from the motive from which they spring. This principle is at the very root of Catholic theology.

But we know that acts of penance are useful, because they do proceed from a spirit of penance. For it would be a strange thing if our intentions were good, and the acts proceeding from them were not good; since these acts complete the interior motive, and since, from the nature of man, these outward works react on the interior motive, and strengthen it.

This is why, in the words of the Commination Service, we are urged to bring forth "worthy fruits of penance." As the fruit is the produce of the tree, not the tree itself, even so the fruits of penance are the works that manifest the spirit of repentance. This, too, is the meaning of the teaching of St. John Baptist when he exhorted the multitude to flee from the wrath to come, "Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance."[1] The Church, by instituting the season of Lent for that purpose, does not, of course, mean to imply that Lent is the only time for doing penance. It must be part of our life. Still less does the Church imply that by a little severity during this season we can purchase the right to greater laxity and luxury than ever when Lent is over. But there must be different times set apart for different kinds of instructions. The Church cannot say all things at once. Her message is not so short or so meagre as modern sectaries would make it. She has much to say—different chords to touch—different truths to tell; and she shows by the light of this season, and by all

[1] St. Luke iii. 8.

its arrangements, that she considers Penance (which is the burden of her present instructions) one of the most necessary and important of all the lessons she has to teach. We shall then most completely follow out her instructions by thinking *why* we ought to do penance, and *how* we ought to do it.

Why must we do penance? The choice of God on our part is a different thing from what it was to the angels in Paradise, or to our first parents in Eden. To them it was a first choice. They had but to open their hearts and wills to see God's beauty and goodness, and choose it. There was nothing in the way; no awful form to rise up and keep them back. But with us how different! We have turned away from that Eternal Beauty, and despised the Most High, and contemned the Most Holy. We have flung away His grace at the call of passion, trampled under foot His commandments, and given our allegiance (whenever we have fallen into mortal sin) to the enemies of all good. How then can the past be as if it had not been? Can years spent in carelessness, in neglect of God, in sin, be so effaced that they shall be as if they had been spent in virtue? No. If we return to God, we must return with hatred in our hearts as well as love. We must hate our sins, hate them with a deep, earnest hatred, not necessarily an emotional hatred, but with a steady, determined act of the will. We must acknowledge that we deserve punishment, and submit ourselves to the terms which God may dictate.

This surely is the meaning of the procession of penitents that pass before us in the pages of the Holy Scriptures. David, bowed in sackcloth and ashes; Magdalene, with her tears and broken heart at the feet of Jesus, the Refuge of sinners; St. Peter, in his deep contrition when our Divine Lord looked upon him; and the Apostle St. Paul, with his spirit of penance. We must turn away from sin, as well as turn to God. Penance—hatred of sin—is necessary to our pardon, and doubtless the Sacrament of Penance was so called because in it God completes and accepts the motive of penance—this hatred of our past sins, which is the indispensable condition of its saving efficacy. Then again, penance is necessary in order to ward off temporal chastisements. There are two ends for which God inflicts temporal punishments: one is to lead men to conversion; for this reason He sent captivity to the Jews, and so He sends us many a trial. Now by the spirit of penance we may perhaps escape such visitations, for we render them less necessary.

Again, God sends us affliction to bring us closer to Him. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore will I punish you for all your iniquities."[1] "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth."[2] Surely this is the secret of many a hard trial sent to faithful souls; and is it not also a clue to the state of those among the faithful departed who are not yet in heaven? But still further, penance is necessary in order

[1] Amos iii. 2. [2] Heb. xii. 6.

to secure our perseverance in God's friendship. Why is our conversion of such short duration? Why do we rise from sin, only to fall again? Because we do not hate sin enough. There is so little penance in our life, so little fear of sin: "Be not without fear about sins forgiven, and add not sin to sin,"[1] says the Holy Scripture.

But granted that the penitential spirit is needed—how shall we do penance?

Fasting is but one way; very few, however, are able to fast in the strict sense of the word. Many are, by the wisdom of the Church, exempt. The spirit of penance will lead us, however, not to dispense ourselves; but, if we need dispensation, to obtain it from our spiritual guide.

But there are many ways of doing penance which are within the reach of all. First, we can all accept, in the spirit of penance, the hardships which so often meet us in our life.

We cannot, very likely, do the things we read of in the lives of the Saints—all indeed are not called to imitate their heroic actions; they were special inspirations of the Spirit of ghostly strength; but we can all make a virtue of necessity, and accept with resignation, and perhaps thankfulness, the sufferings which the Saints coveted with eager desire. Afflictions befall us—we need not think they are necessarily sent on account of our own special sins. Our Lord Himself seems to have rebuked this interpretation of affliction

[1] Ecclus. v. 5. (Vulg.)

when, in answer to the question whether they on whom the tower of Siloam fell were in a special way sinners, He said, "I tell you, Nay";[1] and again, of the blind man, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents."[2]

But without coming to any such conclusion as that God has sent His afflictions as a punishment, we can take them as such, and turn them into most excellent penances. In a true sense it may be said that God does not often *send* the afflictions of life at all. He does not hinder their coming upon us, for to do so would necessitate a continuous interference with His own laws, and the sequence of cause and effect.

We may and we should accept all pains and trials in life as they come, out of hatred for sin—for *our* sins. This is doing penance. You are sick and suffering perhaps; in the spirit of penance exclaim, "In union, O Lord, with Thy suffering life, and with Thy Cross and Passion, I offer Thee this sickness; may it be for my soul's eternal good." Or you are in sorrow, your lot is desolate, you have lost the one who gave to life its brightness and joy. Now is the time for the spirit of penance to show itself: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the Name of the Lord."[3] Or, again, you are unhappy at home—can you not, by bearing with patience the contradiction and unkindness of others, find indeed a searching penance? Perhaps none harder can be found. Examine carefully if you are not to blame,

[1] St. Luke xiii. 5. [2] St. John ix. 3. [3] Job i. 21.

if some fault of your own is not a cause—if not *the* cause—of the trouble. If after such examination you can find none, and none is pointed out to you, then offer your unhappiness to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Who "endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself."[1] Think of your sins and be silent. Time is short—Eternity long;

> "Rest comes at length; though life be long and dreary,
> The day must dawn, and darksome night be past;
> Faith's journey ends in welcome to the weary,
> And heaven, the heart's true home, will come at last."

Lastly, the pains of a good life are opportunities of penance. True it is that a holy life is after all the happiest a man can live on earth, but we cannot deny there are occasions when it is very irksome. It is painful to follow any rule of life—difficult to be out of harmony with the world around us; difficult to look at sin in the way we ought; difficult to cast out bewildering doubts and fears; difficult to avoid the occasions of sin; painful, perhaps, to get up betimes to be at early Communion; troublesome to pray when the spirit seems cold and dead within. Yes, these things, to some at all events, are real trials. But does Christ ever lead us to suppose that His religion shall be all smoothness? That there shall be no cross, no self denial, no bearing of His yoke, easy though it be when shared with Him? Surely not, and all

[1] Heb. xii. 3.

these trials are splendid opportunities of penance, and the better because, coming in the ordinary course of life, they are not likely to lead us into spiritual pride. But we lose half the merit we might gain, by doing and suffering these things without offering them to Jesus Christ. The things themselves are useless for our sanctification if we have not the good intention which turns them all into gold. "Do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus"[1] should be our motto for the coming Lent.

What is the meaning, then, of a season like Lent? In the old services for Ash Wednesday—the first day of Lent—the sign of the cross was marked in ashes upon the heads of the kneeling people—a ceremony accompanied by these solemn words: "Remember, O man, that thou art dust, and unto dust shalt thou return." Was not such a ceremony a baptism of penance, a *memento mori?* Shall we then be proud? Shall we, whose bodies must soon return to dust, yield ourselves wholly up to the world or the flesh? Let us then be firmly persuaded to use aright the sufferings of our daily life.

There is one thought, however, brought vividly to mind on this Quinquagesima Sunday; it is this: that "all our doings without charity are nothing worth." Love—not fear or even faith—is the spirit of Christ and the fulfilling of His law. It seems to be for this reason that, before we enter into the holy season of penance, the Church reads to us the Epistle for this

[1] Col. iii. 17.

Sunday: "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."[1] We could not do better than to make it a rule to read this Epistle each week in order to stir up continually the spirit of love as the life of the spirit of penance. It was the love of Christ that led Him to die for us; it was the love—the charity of Christ—that constrained the Apostle St. Paul to suffer so great things for the faith of the Gospel.[2] Let us then see that for the love of Christ we use our trials as penances. Whether we will or no we must suffer: the penitent and the impenitent thief were alike crucified, but one knew how to make his suffering lead to God. There is no way to heaven but that of the holy Cross. Our Blessed Lord has Himself passed along that road, and we must follow in His footprints. Calvary was very dark—even the light of God's presence seemed to have gone out in the Sacred Heart—but the darkness passed away, and the Sun which sank to rest upon the first Good Friday went but to light up the land of the shadow of death, and then, on Easter Day, burst forth again in wondrous beauty to be for ever the Life and Light of the new Creation of God.

When Jesus leads the way all must follow—there are no exceptions. The Virgin Mother herself stood broken-hearted at the foot of the Cross. Indeed it was a sharp sword that pierced her most pure heart.

[1] 1 Cor. xiii. 3. [2] 2 Cor. v. 14.

"To whom can I compare thee, O daughter of Jerusalem? and to whom shall I liken thee, O Virgin daughter of Zion, for thy sorrow is great as the sea?"[1] Behold then the sorrowful Mother, clothed with grief, keeping her faithful watch at the right hand of her crucified Son; she is with Him in the darkness. But raise the eye of faith, look up, and there, far above angelic choirs, by the throne of Jesus in heaven, upon His right hand, doth stand "the Queen in a vesture of gold."[2] The darkness of Calvary has passed away in the brightness of heaven, and the Mother of Sorrows is now sun-clothed in the kingdom of her God—of that God Who still deigns to call her Mother. So true is it that "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory".[3]

PASSAGES FOR READING.

(1) St. Matt. iv. 1, 2. The first man sinned by eating the forbidden fruit in the beautiful Eden. The Second Man, "the Lord from heaven," atoned for this by His fast in the wilderness.

He teaches us to mortify ourselves.

(2) Exod. xxiv. 18. The first sin was disobedience to the law of God. When the law was given in explicit commands on Mount Sinai Moses was forty days and forty nights fasting on the Mount.

(3) 1 Kings xix. 8. Elijah goes in obedience to Horeb, in the strength of the meat he had eaten in obedience. We

[1] Lam. ii. 13. (Vulg.) [2] Ps. xlv. 10. [3] 2 Cor. iv. 17.

learn that "man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord." "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

(4) Jonah iii. 4–10. Here again, it is only when Jonah acts in obedience that he has God's blessing upon his work. At his preaching the Ninevites fast forty days and are pardoned by God. If, in obedience to the Church, we also fast, "who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from His fierce anger, that we perish not?" (*v.* 9.)

(5) St. Matt. xvii. 14–21. If we would escape the tyranny of our sensual nature, we must mortify the body as well as discipline the will.

(6) St. Matt. vi. 1, 5, 16. Prayer, almsgiving, and fasting are all equally taught by Jesus Christ as needful; but all are endangered by being done in the wrong spirit. Ostentation is destructive of the *spirit* of penance.

Liturgical Notes for Lent

"Lent. A fast of forty days preceding Easter; kept, after the example of Moses, Elias, and, above all, of Christ Himself, in order to prepare the faithful for the Easter feast, and also, of course, on account of the general advantages to be derived from a long period of penance. There is proof that Lent, in the general sense of a fast preceding Easter, has been known from, or nearly from, Apostolic times. . . . From the early part of the fourth century onwards there are many references to Lent as a period of about forty days. The Sundays in Lent are, of course, not included in the fast. We must remember that, strictly speaking, fasting is abstinence from all

food and drink; but as this is obviously impossible, the Church calls fasting the abstinence from flesh meat, and the reducing very considerably the quantity and quality of the usual meals. Days of *Abstinence* (*i.e.*, Friday in each week) are *not* fasting days, because although flesh meat is forbidden there are no other restrictions placed upon what may be eaten. Lent is not only a season of fasting, but also of mourning. The faithful beg God's mercy for themselves and others. The money spared by fasting should be given in alms. The Church has always strongly discountenanced festivities of all kinds during Lent."[1]

As formerly Lent did not begin until the first Sunday in Lent, the hymns are not changed until the Saturday Vespers before this Sunday.

OFFICE HYMNS.

Vespers. *Audi, benigne Conditor.*
"O merciful Creator, hear."—*A. and M.*, 87.

Matins. *Ex more docti mystico.*
"By precepts taught of ages past."—*A. and M.*, 85.

Lauds. *O Sol salutis, intimis.*
"Now Christ, Thou Sun of Righteousness."[2]

The Psalm *Miserere* (Ps. li.) is frequently repeated during Lent.

[1] Abridged from *A Catholic Dictionary.*
[2] *The Day Office of the Church*, not in *A. and M.* or Hymnal Noted.

XIX.

ASH WEDNESDAY

The Day of Temptation in the Wilderness

Type

"O come, let us worship and fall down: and kneel before the Lord our Maker. For He is the Lord our God; and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand. To-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness: when your fathers tempted Me, proved Me, and saw My works. Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their hearts, for they have not known My ways: unto whom I sware in My wrath that they should not enter into My rest." (Ps. xcv. 6–11.)

Jesus Christ

"Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."
"Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God." (St. Matt. iv. 7, 10.)

The Soul

"Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents." (1 Cor. x. 9.)

XIX.

The Day of Temptation in the Wilderness

LIFE is frequently put before us in the Holy Scripture as a time in which some victory is to be gained.

St. Paul, for example, speaks more than once of the Christian life as a warfare, and exhorts his converts to "fight the good fight of faith"[1] against every foe, carnal or spiritual. It is the thought of the power of conquest, that has been made ours through union with Christ, that makes this great Apostle exclaim: "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."[2]

At another time St. Paul speaks of the spiritual life as a race, and, mindful of the immense pains taken by the Greek athletes to obtain the corruptible crown of leaves, he urges the Christian to take at least equal trouble to secure eternal life. It was on Septuagesima Sunday that the Church read to us these words in the Epistle for the day: "Know ye not, that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth

[1] 1 Tim. vi. 12. [2] 1 Cor. xv. 57.

for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible."[1]

The idea of difficulty to be met and overcome, of a battle against opposing powers, runs through the whole of God's written Word, but nowhere is it so forcibly expressed as in the Epistles of the great Apostle St. Paul. In this teaching of Holy Scripture—that the spiritual life has aims and ideals and an end that can be attained only by constant effort and conflict—we have only a law of all progress applied to the spiritual life. There is no art, no science, no object of any kind that is worth attaining, that can be mastered without some effort. In every step of our way through life we meet with difficulty, and our ordinary hope of any success in the world is based upon meeting these difficulties, planning their overthrow, and carrying out our object in spite of them. About this fact there can be no question. The whole progress of the world is the result of a continuous struggle against opposition. Ignorance is not dispelled by a miraculous illumination, but by the collective brain of one age starting on new quests after knowledge from the point reached in the preceding period. In one form or another all progress means increase of knowledge. The success of an army depends upon this as much as the success of the physician or the scientist. "Knowledge is power"; and every fresh achievement of the human mind, and every

[1] 1 Cor. ix. 24, 25.

application of its reasoning to action marks a victory, hardly won, against formidable odds. The object sought may be prosaic in the extreme—the hoarding of money, or the winning of an election; or on the other hand it may be in the highest degree unselfish and noble; but the fact will remain that nothing can be done without some effort, some trouble, some victory over difficulty. In every such effort to obtain the mastery there is an end in view, an object to gain, and it is in its attainment that the crown is won. "A few fading leaves" was the symbol that well repaid the athlete for all his self-discipline; it was the outward sign of a coveted success.

The Holy Scriptures encourage this earnestness in the business of everyday life, and base upon it an argument for equal zeal in the life of the spirit. In the natural order it is argued a man does well to use his bodily and mental powers to succeed in life, only let him not be slack to use these same powers lawfully, and place them under the government of the spirit. He must not only strive for the mastery, but "strive lawfully."

But worthy as all these aims of life are, they are not the whole aim of life. They belong to the "natural man." They concern the body and the rational soul, but they offer no scope for that higher region of the soul's life in which the Spirit of God comes in contact with the spirit in man. The carnal man (*σαρκικός*) is satisfied with sensual pleasures; the natural man

(ψυχικός) strives after aims and ambitions far more lofty, and yet merely concerned with life here on earth; whereas he whom St. Paul calls the spiritual man (πνευματικός) adds to reason faith, and while not undervaluing the corruptible crown, yet ever has in view the need of striving after that which is incorruptible. Such a man believes that life reaches on far beyond this present state of existence; that time may be so used as to fit him for eternity.

> "Life is probation, and this earth no goal,
> But starting point of man. . . ."[1]

But where struggle is, there must be temptation. What the battlefield is to the soldier, and the race to the athlete, that is temptation to the Christian. This was well expressed by the mediæval Scholastic, Peter Lombard: "None," he writes, "can be crowned unless he conquer, nor conquer unless he fight, nor fight unless he have enemies and temptations. In fact, the more the true servants of God try and walk worthy of their vocation, and the more they endeavour to tread in the footsteps of their Lord, the more Satan assaults them with his temptations."[2] Temptation is so needful that St. James does not hesitate to say, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation."[3] When the Eternal Word took to Himself our human nature, He willed to be in all things like as we are. He would subject Himself to the same laws of success that bind the children

[1] *The Pope*, BROWNING. [2] Cassiodorus. [3] St. James i. 12.

of men. He had His own object to attain, His own aims, His own desires. He must therefore be tried, He must be "in all points tempted like as we are."[1]

At the beginning of Lent the Church has chosen to dwell upon this temptation of our Lord. It forms the Gospel for next Sunday. The reason for this choice is evident. Lent is a time in which the Church would have us attack our natural sensuality, and assert the supreme dominion of a will in harmony with the will of God over the lower part of our nature, through which we are constantly tempted to disobey God. She would have us understand that temptation is far from being a bad sign—since even the All-Holy Son of Man was tempted. She would have us learn the subtlety of the tempter — the forms of temptation which he presents to those who are already victorious over the baser passions, and the way in which we may hope to be "more than conquerors."[2]

I.

Our Lord's temptation followed His baptism by John in the Jordan. St. Luke tells us that, "Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being forty days tempted of the devil."[3] St. Matthew makes it clear that our Lord was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness for this very purpose—"to be tempted of

[1] Heb. iv. 15. [2] Rom. viii. 37. [3] St. Luke iv. 1, 2.

the devil."[1] St. Mark and St. Luke imply that our Lord was tempted during the whole forty days. "He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan."[2] "Being forty days tempted of the devil."[3] From St. Matthew and St. Luke we learn that the recorded temptations took place either on the fortieth day of our Lord's fast, or immediately after it.

St. Matthew writes: "When He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He was afterward an hungred."[4] St. Luke, after saying that our Lord was "forty days tempted of the devil," adds, "And in those days He did eat nothing; and when they were ended, He afterward hungered."[5]

It is therefore most probable that there were during the forty days many temptations of our Lord unrecorded in Holy Scripture. These that are recorded must have a special significance—they are written "for our learning."[6]

Our Lord is the Second Adam. He is led up of the Spirit immediately after His baptism to be tempted by the devil in the wilderness. In this fast we may see the antitype of the first temptation recorded in the Bible. It was after God had breathed into man "the breath of life"—a communication of His own spiritual Nature—that the evil spirit came in the beautiful garden of Eden to tempt the first man. The consequence of Adam's disobedience brought a curse upon the ground:

[1] St. Matt. iv. 1. [2] St. Mark i. 13. [3] St. Luke iv. 2.
[4] St. Matt. iv. 2. [5] St. Luke iv. 2. [6] Rom. xv. 4.

"Cursed is the ground for thy sake . . . thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee."[1]

It was very full of significance then that our Lord was tempted in the *wilderness*—a type of the ruin and desolation wrought by sin. Jesus Christ is led up into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. In a former chapter the consideration of the first temptation of man in Eden brought us face to face with the mysterious serpent who is there spoken of as the tempter. The fact that in our Lord's temptation we are plainly told that the tempter is none other than Satan confirms the interpretation that it was none other than this same Evil One who tempted our first parents. The serpent is "called also the Devil and Satan"—and he is the Tempter, the Liar, and the Adversary of man. In Eden he could not perhaps disclose himself as plainly as in the wilderness, for man had not then placed himself under the dominion of evil. The first Adam voluntarily placed himself under the influence of the Evil One. Man was the highest point in creation: by his body formed out of the dust man was in contact with the material world; by his soul he had relationship with the spiritual beings of the unseen world, and with God, "the Father of spirits."[2]

Man's fall therefore affected all forms of creation over which he himself had dominion—all that was on an equality with, or beneath him. "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth"; it waits to be "delivered

[1] Gen. iii. 17, 18. [2] Heb. xii. 9.

from the bondage of corruption,"[1] but this can only be when man himself is restored. The redemption of the body from the power of sin and death will mean also that there shall be a "new heaven and a new earth,"[2] and the curse shall be taken away, and God be all in all.

The Incarnation brought this long-looked-for hope within sight. The aim of the Second Adam is to undo the primal curse. He "was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil";[3] but He can only accomplish this by Himself meeting the Evil One face to face, and overcoming his temptations. Into the desert, therefore, the Second Adam is led of the Spirit to be tempted by the devil. During forty days the Son of Man is subject to these attempts, but as they have all so far failed, he makes a further endeavour at the end of our Lord's forty days' fast. Almost all commentators agree in thinking that Satan did not know of the mystery of the Incarnation, but he knew that never had a child of man so absolutely put aside all that was evil as our Lord had hitherto during the thirty years. It is therefore with the twofold object of finding out whether or no Jesus was the Christ, and leading Him, if it may be, into sin, that the devil seeks Him out in the wilderness. He might well doubt as to His Divine Nature, since, although he had heard of the star leading to Bethlehem, of the voice from heaven at the baptism, and of the witness of St. John Baptist,

[1] Rom. viii. 21. [2] Rev. xxi. 1. [3] 1 St. John iii. 8.

he, on the other hand, had known of the flight into Egypt, of the lowly, hidden life at Nazareth, and now he finds Him "an hungred" after a long fast. The Evil One has no doubt as to the true humanity of our Lord, but he has a doubt as to His Divine Nature. His long experience leads him to think that he may best solve this doubt by some unusual forms of temptation. Coming, then, to our Lord, he said, "If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread."[1] The first sin had been an act of disobedience to the command of God, Who had said of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, "thou shalt not eat of it."[2] The devil fitly proposes to our Lord a temptation connected with the gratification of appetite. There would not have been any direct proof that our Lord was the Son of God in the mere miraculous turning of the stones into bread; but the Evil One challenges this miracle as a *witness* to the truth of His claim: "If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread."

We notice that this temptation is to distrust God, and to use miraculous power to satisfy His own needs. Our Lord, throughout His ministry, used the Divine power only for the good of others.

The gratification of appetite had not only been the form in which the primal sin had been committed, but it represented the whole life of the senses unlawfully indulged. The lust of the flesh could in no way be

[1] St. Matt. iv. 3. [2] Gen. ii. 17.

suggested but in this form to either the first or Second Adam. The temptation must come from without, not from within; but the temptation appealed to a natural appetite. The desire of food was a sinless desire, such as even the Most Holy could experience. All other forms of the lust of the flesh would have implied a fallen nature had there been any interior craving for their satisfaction. The Evil One therefore presented the temptation to gratify bodily appetite in the only form in which such a temptation could come to either the first or the Second Adam. He appeals to the flesh —to the tyranny of concupiscence that enslaved the greater part of mankind. Man is easily led astray by the appetites, and brought under their imperious dominion to become carnal (σαρκικός). Our Lord, however, although "an hungred," will pay no heed to the temptation. He waves back Satan with the "sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God":[1] "He answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."[2] In Eden Satan had dared to dispute God's word: "Yea, hath God said?"[3] but now he retired baffled.

"Then the devil taketh Him up into the holy city, and setteth Him on a pinnacle of the Temple, and saith unto Him, If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down; for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands

[1] Eph. vi. 17. [2] St. Matt. iv. 4. [3] Gen. iii. 1.

they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone."[1] Having failed in his attack upon the bodily appetite, Satan attacks the loftier region of our nature, and proposes an act of presumption and self-will. He distorts the promise in the Psalms by leaving out the important qualification "in all thy ways." Like Balaam he thinks a change of place may give him an advantage, and that, having failed in the desert, he may succeed on the pinnacle of the Temple. "The holy city" is so unlike the wilderness, may not Satan hope for victory here, through display of that Divine power the Son of Man has claimed? "If Thou be the Son of God" prove it by a sudden descent into the courts of the Temple — no harm can come, since there is the promise of the ministry of the holy angels to "bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone." But again Satan is defeated, rebuked by another passage from the Holy Scriptures: "Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."[2]

The appeal to the independence of the will, by which the natural man (ψυχικός) is so often cast down when he has escaped the lower forms of sin, entirely fails to turn aside Jesus Christ from "the ways" of God. Foiled thus again, "the devil taketh Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them;

[1] St. Matt. iv 5, 6. [2] *v.* 7.

and saith unto Him, All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me."[1]

This is the crowning temptation. Our Lord has come to purchase the kingdoms of the world, over which Satan has dared to claim dominion; St. Luke tells us that he advanced this claim at this very moment: "The devil said unto Him, All this power will I give Thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If Thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be Thine."[2] Satan had indeed acquired, through his victory in Eden, great power over man and over the material world; he is indeed "the Prince of this world."[3] But our Lord would not in this way take his power from him.

The temptation was to escape the Passion, the bitter suffering of death as the penalty of sin; and to acquire the kingdoms of the world, which He had come to purchase, without the shame of the Cross. How keenly our Lord felt the human desire to escape this terrible suffering of the Passion was shown by the agony in Gethsemane. It is noticeable also that when St. Peter, for a very different motive, suggested the same avoidance of His Passion, our Lord rebuked him in the same words as those here used: "Get thee behind me, *Satan;* thou art an offence unto Me."[4] As if St. Peter's words reminded our Lord of the Satanic temptation in the wilderness.

[1] St. Matt. iv. 8, 9.
[2] St. Luke iv. 6, 7.
[3] St. John xiv. 30.
[4] St. Matt. xvi. 23.

In a former chapter on "the Mystery of the Serpent" the fall of the evil angels was shown to be probably connected with a refusal to worship the vision of the Incarnate Son. Lucifer desired the honour of the hypostatic union for himself, and became the Anti-Christ—the adversary of the Incarnate Word, as well as the adversary of all who bear a resemblance to that Sacred One.

The whole work and effort of Satan is to draw men into his service and his worship. It was therefore the supreme audacity — the climax of all presumptuous pride—for Lucifer to invite Him to Whom worship was due to render worship to himself, the representative rebel angel whose fall had been brought about by refusal to adore the Word made Flesh.

It was, as it were, carrying the tide of sin back to its first cause for this rebel angel to demand for himself from the Incarnate Son the very worship he had refused to give "in the beginning" to the Eternal Word. In this temptation he therefore assaulted the highest region of the human soul — the spirit that offers itself in worship to God. He called upon the whole man as he stands related to God—the spiritual man (πνευματικός), to abase himself.

Beyond this Satan could not go: "Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind Me, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."[1] As soon as the

[1] St. Luke iv. 8.

leader of the evil angels departed, we read that the holy angels came to do our Lord service: "Then the devil leaveth Him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto Him."[1]

II.

"As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God,"[2] and every child of God must find that he is led up into the wilderness to be sooner or later tempted of the devil. Temptation is far from being in itself an evil; it is the condition of all formation of character, and of all real progress. We become very much what our temptations have made us. They come, and pass away; they do their work; but they never leave us in the same spiritual state as that in which they found us. If we overcome, we are stronger; if we are conquered we are weakened. Each time we yield to any temptation, we prepare to yield again; to resist becomes more difficult, and thus in time our whole life is dragged down into subjection to sin. We become his servants to whom we obey.

[1] St. Matt. iv. 11. There is a strange coincidence in the fact that in the three attempts made on our Lord's life there are points of resemblance to these three temptations. In one case (St. John viii. 59) His enemies took up stones to stone Him; in another (St. Luke iv. 29) they tried to cast Him down from a height; and finally it was on the "mountain" of Calvary that the great Sacrifice of the Cross was offered in worship to God; the kingdoms of the world were rescued from Satan's power; and the lesson of supreme trust in God given to us, and the Eucharistic Sacrifice made effectual, in which the Bread of Life is given to be the food of immortality.

[2] Rom. viii. 14.

And now what lessons shall we gather from these three temptations?

1. The first suggestion of the Evil One was to distrust God and to gratify the natural appetite in an unlawful way. We gather this from the words chosen by our Lord in His rebuke to Satan. He quotes the passage from Deuteronomy which recalled to Israel the watchful providence of God over them during the forty years' wandering in the wilderness, and the satisfying of their hunger by the manna. "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, . . . and He . . . suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, . . . that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live." [1]

But this temptation stands for all the temptations that belong to "the lust of the flesh." Every sinful gratification of even the natural appetites is figured in this suggestion of the Evil One. To our Lord no temptation could come from within, but with us it is otherwise—as He Himself taught, "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man." [2]

We can therefore understand the value of the Lenten discipline of fasting. By denying ourselves in the

[1] Deut. viii. 2, 3. [2] St. Matt. xv. 19, 20.

lawful gratification of appetite we strengthen the will, and keep under the body. It is for this that we pray: "O Lord, Who for our sake didst fast forty days and forty nights; give us grace to use such abstinence, that, our flesh being subdued to the Spirit, we may ever obey Thy godly motions in righteousness, and true holiness, to Thy honour and glory."[1]

2. Turning to the second temptation, it seems to have been exactly the opposite to the first. Then it was to distrust of God, now to presumption; then to use Divine power to anticipate God's providence, now to use the same power to test the promises made to the faithful. So, too, is it not often with ourselves? We resist the more visible and coarse temptations of appetite, and we are then led up higher, and even in the heights of the city of God are assailed by temptations to pride and over-confidence. Satan puffs men up with a false confidence in the mercy of God, that they may go on serving and obeying pride and vainglory, and yet commit themselves to the God Who is meek and lowly of Heart. He makes us think ourselves on the pinnacle of spiritual greatness, only that we may fall the lower, and end—as the presumptuous often end—in despair. Yet for our comfort let us remember that he can only tempt; nothing but our own will can cast us down.

And so we will remember that "God's manner is, when He meaneth to exalt us, He will first make us

[1] Collect 1st Sunday in Lent.

humble and lowly. The devil's manner is just the opposite; he would exalt us to the clouds that he may bring us down 'to the lowest grave.' He lifts up Adam with pride to desire to be as God, only that he may make him in reality to become as the beasts that perish. He desires that what is written of himself may be true of us, 'I beheld Satan, as lightning fall from heaven.'"

So again we have our Lenten work made clear, it is not only to mortify the deeds of the body, not only to trust God, but also to examine our ways and see if they be His ways, and consequently whether we have a right to expect His watchful care and protection. The will must be conformed to the will of God if we are to escape either presumption or despair. He will keep us in all our ways, if in all our ways we are led by the Spirit of God and not by self-will. Let us ask Him to guide us and lead us, and then trust ourselves wholly to His care. In the past we have been perhaps dashed down to the ground through trusting in self, or presumptuous reliance on God, but now let the Lenten discipline lead us in the way of His commandments.

"I was not ever thus, nor prayed that Thou
Shouldst lead me on;
I loved to choose and see my path; but now
Lead Thou me on.
I loved the garish day, and, spite of fears,
Pride ruled my will: remember not past years."

3. In the last, the third temptation, we are reminded that it was the will of God, "in bringing many sons to glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through suffering."[1] And what suffering! "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me."[2]

So too it may be with us. We have before us our aim in life, but whatever our motive in it, let us beware how we gain it by departure from God. "*All these* will I give thee," says Satan, "all you aim at, but on one condition—withdraw your worship from God and give it to me." And so, we know it but too well, many a soul has owed its ruin to forgetfulness of this—that to succeed even in a good work can be earned at too great a cost. We set ourselves a work, we lose ourselves in it, and before long we are so absorbed by it that we find, in little things at first, that we are guilty of some lowering of principle to achieve our end, something unworthy, some sacrifice it may be of honesty, some pushing aside without scruple of others; and then we suddenly realise that God is not in our work, but that we are succeeding at the expense of His loss, and His loss means giving our allegiance to another; "All these will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me."

Evil is the absence, more or less, of that perfection which belongs to a creature. As God goes out of our life Satan comes in; our work is outwardly a success, but its virtue has gone. What shall it profit to gain

[1] Heb. ii. 10. [2] St. Matt. xxvi. 39.

the whole world and lose our own soul? "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation,"[1] for tempted he must be—on, right on, to the end; for the devil will never leave us until, in the grace of God, we die, and our soul is committed to angels to bear it up to God: "Come to his aid, ye saints of God; come forth to meet him, ye angels of the Lord; receive his soul and present it in the sight of the Most High."

It can only be when the soul returns to God, when it goes up from the wilderness leaning upon the Beloved,[2] that the tempter with all his temptations will be left behind to trouble and vex it no more: "The Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more for ever."[3]

The soul, carried by angels, will then offer itself in eternal worship to its Lord, and Satan will molest it no more. "Then the devil leaveth Him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto Him."

[1] St. James i. 12. [2] Cant. viii. 5. [3] Exod. xiv. 13.

XX.

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

Epistles to the Seven Churches

(1) EPHESUS

Epistle to the Church of Ephesus

Rev. ii. 1–8.

ANALYSIS.

Who speaks? "He that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand, Who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks."

He praises (1) their labour; (2) patience; (3) intolerance of evil; (4) condemnation of false apostles; (5) suffering, endurance, perseverance; (6) hatred of the deeds of the Nicolaitanes.

He blames this Church (this soul) because "thou hast left thy first love."

He commands: "Repent, and do the first works."

He threatens: "I will remove thy candlestick out of his place."

He promises: "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God."

XX.

"To the Angel of the Church of Ephesus"

EPHESUS, at the time when the vision of the Apocalypse was granted to St. John, was one of the first and most wealthy cities of Asia Minor.

Its commerce brought it into contact with the whole civilised world; its riches, its beauty, and its luxury gave it a foremost place even among cities noted for their magnificence. The worship of Diana, and the splendour of her sanctuary, were a proverb throughout the world. Great, indeed, was "Diana of the Ephesians."[1] The circumstances attending the first introduction of Christianity into this city are not known; but what we are sure of is that the Church of Ephesus made rapid progress, and that it owed much of its lustre to the great Apostle, St. Paul. It was at Ephesus that St. Paul spent two whole years, speaking in the synagogue, and disputing in the school of Tyrannus, "so that," as we read in the Acts of the Apostles, "all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks."[2]

To the Ephesians, again, St. Paul addressed one of

[1] Acts xix. 28. [2] Acts xix. 10.

his most spiritual Epistles. It was no less a saint than St. Timothy, his "own son in the faith,"[1] who was appointed to be the first bishop of that Church. We need not, I think, be surprised that the Church of Ephesus is brought before us as a typical Church, in these Epistles addressed—not by any merely human pastor, but by the great Bishop of the souls of men—to the Churches. But there is a deeper reason than any I have mentioned for this choice of these particular Churches from among others of Asia Minor, which were perhaps larger, and in some ways more important.

That the Church of Ephesus, and not Colosse or Miletus, is chosen confirms the belief that the Churches selected by our Lord collectively represent every state of progress and decay into which the Church on earth may enter, and the spiritual dangers and encouragements for each member of the Church. The Epistle of St. Paul to the Ephesians is dated A.D. 64. In this Epistle the Apostle earnestly implores his converts to walk worthy of their vocation, "with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love,"[2] and again, "Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us."[3]

About thirty years pass by—St. Paul has been called by martyrdom to receive that "incorruptible crown" which he had always longed for.

The Church has not been slothful, and now St. John alone is left of the Apostolic company, and he is in

[1] 1 Tim. i. 2. [2] Eph. iv. 2. [3] Eph. v 2.

exile "for the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ."[1]

To him is revealed, on the Lord's own day, the majesty of the Risen and Ascended Christ.

"I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of Man . . . and He had in His right hand seven stars." "And when I saw Him," writes the Apostle, "I fell at His feet as dead. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not."[2] St. John then continues the account of his vision, and tells how our Lord showed to him "the mystery of the seven stars." "The seven stars are the angels of the seven Churches, and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven Churches."[3]

Immediately following is the command, "Unto the angel of the Church of Ephesus write; These things saith He that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand, Who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: and hast borne, and hast patience, and for My Name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first

[1] Rev. i. 9. [2] Rev. i. 12, 13, 16, 17. [3] Rev. i. 20.

works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God."[1]

Was there no connection between the exhortation of St. Paul to the Ephesians, "Walk in love," and the rebuke, "I have this against thee, that thou hast left thy first love"? The threat in case of refusal to repent is (as in each case) appropriate to the attribute of the introductory vision. He "Who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks" declares that if they will not "repent"—will not "do the first works," He will "come and remove" their "candlestick out of his place."

And so it has happened—the city which was once so renowned, so full of riches, so bound up with the commerce of the world, what is its condition now? It is a ruin—a waste place, in which hardly one stone has been left upon another.

The Church nurtured by the Apostle Paul, governed by St. Timothy, hallowed by the presence of the Mother of our Lord; the Church in which the beloved Apostle spent the last years of his life, where is it? It is gone—no sign of it remains—the threat has been

[1] Rev. ii. 1–8.

carried out—its "candlestick" has been removed out of its place; and Ephesus is, as its name (which means relaxation) itself implies, a warning to a Church grown lax in love—whose fervour has burned low. To every soul deserving of the rebuke, "Thou hast left thy first love," Ephesus cries out to "repent, and do the first works," lest its light too should go out in darkness.

Let us note two or three points in this first Epistle of our Lord to His Church, for if each Epistle is written to a special Church, yet is each also written to "the Churches," and to the individual Christian.

Our Lord's repeated invitation when on earth, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear," is once more addressed to each soul: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches."

At the outset we are surprised at the great virtues of this doomed Church: "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil." Notice how eminent these works must have been by their twofold mention. In verse 2 "thy labour" is spoken of, and the perseverance in labour is in verse 3 dwelt upon once more: "(thou) hast laboured, and hast not fainted."

The "patience" of the Ephesian Church is also twice mentioned. "Where God is," says Tertullian, "there is His foster-child—Patience." St. John tells us that he himself was a "brother and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ."[1]

[1] Rev. i. 9.

Here, then, we have great virtues: there is hard and sustained toil for the cause of Christ; there is the patience of saints in longsuffering for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ; there is an avoidance of evil-doers, very contrary to the state of mind found in the reprobate, who, St. Paul says, not only do things which are evil, "but have pleasure in them that do them."[1]

Yet once more, there seems to have been in the Ephesian Church a strict orthodoxy, or clinging to the true faith: "Thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars." There is evidently here no "comprehensive" Christianity —no desire to waive Apostolic order, and recognise every claimant as a duly ordained minister of Christ. The "undenominational Christianity," so popular in our day, seems not to have stained the Church of Ephesus: "Thou hast tried them . . . and . . . found them liars."

And yet all is but "as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal," for the old reason given by St. Paul—want of love. "I have this against thee, that thou hast left thy first love." Does it sound a trifle? Do we think it a small matter amid so much that is good—this leaving of the first love? Not so, it is a fall, and that no slight one. "Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent." A period of thirty years has passed since St. Paul wrote to the Ephesians. This would account for the dying out of the first fervour that had been

[1] Rom. i. 32.

characteristic of those who had personally been under the Apostle's influence. The new generation inherited the traditions, glorious and great, of the past—but they had lost the spirit which inspired "the first works."

We see the same thing to-day among ourselves, when Bishops who have none of the Catholic spirit of the Primitive Church fall back upon anything Primitive that happens to favour their quite modern Protestant views—regardless of the fact that the whole spirit of the early Church was opposed to their own.

Just as, for rejecting the Incarnate Love of God, Jerusalem—the city of God's vision and peace—was laid low, and not one stone left upon another, so the Church, or the individual soul is in God's sight a waste place, if it have not love, even though it have all faith, and all good works, and the spirit to endure martyrdom.

And why? Because God is neither faith, nor hope, but *Love*, and to dwell in love is to dwell in God; and nothing, absolutely nothing, can take its place. "Love is the fulfilling of the law,"[1] the putting of the right spirit into the right action; whereas the strictest "keeping of the law," without love for the motive, will only merit the "Woe unto you," spoken so often by our Lord to the Pharisees.

And for ourselves? Happy are we if our Lord could say, "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are

[1] Rom. xiii. 10.

apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: and hast borne, and hast patience, and for My Name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted." But might He not have this against us, that we too have left our first love? Dare we say there is no cause for uneasiness as we look within? Do we not look back sometimes to our first conversion to a definite service of God, and feel that, instead of going forward to the heavenly country, we have turned back into Egypt? Our former Communions, compared with many a later one? Happy are we, if we have no cause for regret. Our first Confession—and now? There must be a difference, of course; it *was* our first Confession, our first Communion, and it would be, perhaps, unreasonable for there to have been no "first love," in a special sense, about those solemn new experiences. These emotions have perhaps passed quite away, or at best they are capricious, lifting us up one day into a seeming foretaste of heaven, and then leaving us as suddenly, a prey to weariness in, and distaste for, the whole work of the spiritual life.

Sensible sweetness may be given to us for a definite purpose: it cannot last. If we use it aright, when it departs we are able to get on without it. But on the other hand, if we depend on these feelings and rest in them, we shall find ourselves in great perplexity and unhappiness when they leave us. Ought we not rather to use them as an incitement to deeds of love, mercy, truth, meekness, and holiness?

"Impassioned thoughts, high inspirations, sublime imaginings, have no strength in them"; and therefore we may be certain that by leaving "the first love," something quite other than being without some strong emotions that we may have had in the past is intended.

What exactly is intended is not so easy to decide. The suggestions I make, I offer in all humility, leaving it rather to God the Holy Ghost, the great Searcher of hearts, to suggest to each soul what it may mean in its own case, rather than myself professing to solve the difficulty. It is, however, not unlikely that the fault mentioned was a departure in the intercourse of daily life from the standard which St. Paul had exhorted the Ephesians to aim at: "Forbearing one another in love," "Walk in love."

The greater works—the labour, the patience, the intolerance of evil—seem all that could be desired, but may not work for Christ go hand in hand with forgetfulness that the spirit of love is the real power for God in the world? 1 Corinthians xiii. seems to bring this thought strongly before us; our Lord's frequent command, "Love one another"; "Love one another as I have loved you"; "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another," may perhaps be a commentary on the rebuke, "Thou hast left thy first love."

Certain it is that, little as it may seem, the creeping in of discord, of suspicion, of whispering criticisms on

our neighbour, is the beginning of the end. To love one's neighbour as oneself is in one sense so dry and distasteful a precept that we are glad to put it by, and console ourselves for its absence by longer prayers and more meditation. But it cannot go on so. Dry and distasteful and homely as the command is, it comes next to "the great commandment," and the two cannot be separated.

Do we not see, then, how *not* "forbearing one another in love," *not* walking "in love" must end in not having any true love of God at all? "Repent, and do the first works." "Works" perhaps less notable than those mentioned, but works done from the heart, the result of faith working by love. To love our neighbour as ourselves is *more* than whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.

If any think that this is too commonplace an explanation, and that it must be the love of the heart for God alone that was wanting in the Church of Ephesus; if anyone think this, let such an one re-read the Gospel, and note that almost invariably it is our Lord's teaching that in love to our neighbour is shown the reality of our love to God. Those who, in our Lord's parable, are at the left hand in the judgment are there for failure in this love of their neighbour. It is rarely the love of God in the abstract that is represented as of value —perhaps because this love cannot exist apart from love one to another. We see how St. Paul emphasises this in his Epistle to the Corinthians (1, xiii.), where the

all-important "Charity" shows itself in the actions of everyday life. "Charity suffereth long, and is kind . . . endureth all things." It was not intolerance of heresy alone that has too often disgraced the pages of Church history, but an intolerance that had no spirit of Christ to keep it from tyranny. The story of the Inquisition in Spain and elsewhere, as well as the barbarous persecutions of the Romanists by the Protestants are examples of this loss of charity. Instead of letting the tares and wheat grow together till the harvest, the Inquisitors and the so-called Reformers have been too ready to take the judgment into their own hands. The result is an enduring hatred, disgracing the Christian name, destructive of the two great commandments, and abhorrent to the Spirit of Christ.

Let us then just take this one thought—that no labour, no work, however good, will be acceptable to God unless it be done in love, and unless it be accompanied by the spirit of love in the little matters of daily life in which perhaps our "first love" chiefly showed itself. No privileges, however great, can ensure this love to us: the Church of Ephesus had a Saint for its founder, another Saint to guide it, and an inspired Epistle to teach it; but it has passed away—its candlestick has been removed.

Let us labour, let our patience be great, let our hatred of evil be strong, let our orthodoxy be maintained, but above all, let us remember our "first love" —the little duties lovingly performed, the kind words

of sympathy and affection, the kind look, and the endeavour to say a good word one for another.

Remember that these things tell tales of the heart; these things show of what spirit we are. The walking "in love" is really harder than many greater deeds; even as it is, in His sight Who walketh amidst the golden candlesticks, of more value than whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned," "though I have all faith . . . and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing";[1] for God is our All, and God is neither faith, nor hope, but God *is* Love; "and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him."[2] Are not these words of the beloved Apostle a comment on those, "Thou hast left thy first love"?

"To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God." God is Life, and God is Love. To him that abideth in love will be given eternal life. It was Love that overcame the hosts of evil, and conquered upon Calvary. It was Love that was crucified and died upon the Tree, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life; and so fitly here, "to him that overcometh" is given the promise of life. The Incarnate Love died that we might live. Abiding in His love we cannot be touched by the second death.

The first departure from the love of God was

[1] 1 Cor. xiii. 2, 3. [2] 1 St. John iv. 16.

consummated in Eden by taking of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The flaming sword henceforth guarded the tree of life.

The Eternal Son in our nature has opened up the way to this "tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God," and promises a share in it to all who shall follow in His steps, and overcome even as He overcame.

PASSAGES FOR READING.

(1) Rev. i. 20: ii. 1. The seven stars are the angels of the Churches, *i.e.* the chief Shepherd or Bishop who represents the entire "Church" over which he is the appointed ruler. This seems the most probable of the many interpretations of this title. The Church is in "the hand" of God, but this does not hinder self-will from marring the life of the Church. "The seven candlesticks . . . are the seven Churches."

(2) Rev. i. 20. *Seven* is a number of great significance in Holy Scripture. In the Apocalypse it is of frequent occurrence: seven Churches, seven spirits (i. 4), seven candlesticks (i. 12), seven stars (i. 16), seven lamps (iv. 5), seven seals (v. 1), seven horns and seven eyes of the Lamb (v. 6), seven angels with trumpets (viii. 2), seven thunders (x. 3), seven heads of the dragon and seven crowns (xii. 3; xiii. 1), seven last plagues (xv. 1), seven vials (xv. 7), seven mountains (xvii. 9), seven kings (xvii. 10), etc. "The number seven is the *covenant* number, the sign and signature of God's covenant relation to mankind, and above all to the Church." (Abp. Trench, *Comm. on the Epistles to the Seven Churches.*) Hence the Sacraments are *seven*, as they are the *covenanted* channels of grace,

although "two only" (of the seven) are "generally necessary to salvation."

(3) Ps. cxxxix. 23, 24. Can we pray thus? If not, let us take the warning of this Epistle to ourselves.

(4) 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25. These characteristics of "the servant of the Lord" will suggest questions for self-examination, not only to Bishops but to the clergy and people. (See Rev. ii. 2, "Labour and patience.")

(5) Phil. iii. 2. We must beware of evil men, for "evil communications corrupt good manners." (See Rev. ii. 2, "Canst not bear them which are evil.")

(6) 1 St. John iv. 1. "Thou hast tried them," etc. (Rev. ii. 2). St. John knew of no one Episcopal See, union with which secured the faithful from error. The Papal claims were the growth of the later ages of the Church, and are unknown to Holy Scripture. They who said, "I am of Cephas," *i.e.*, of St. Peter, were no whit less to blame than they who said, "I am of Paul." There is but "One" Who is the Head of the Body, the Church—Christ our Lord. The Church is but one—Triumphant, Expectant, and Militant; and over *all* is the one Divine Head. To make the Church a complete Body on earth is to destroy its unity.

XXI.

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

Epistles to the Seven Churches

(2) SMYRNA

Epistle to the Church in Smyrna

Rev. ii. 8–12.

ANALYSIS

Who speaks? "The First and the Last, which was dead, and is alive."

He praises their "tribulation and poverty."

He blames.

He commands: "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer . . . be thou faithful unto death."

He threatens.

He promises: "I will give thee a crown of life." "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death."

XXI.

"To the Angel of the Church in Smyrna"[1]

THE message of our Lord in the Epistle to the Church in Smyrna is one without blame. "I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty (but thou art rich)": and yet there is an impress of suffering stamped upon every line of the message. In the first place, our Lord appears as One "which was *dead*": the message is of death, "Be thou faithful unto death"; and the promise is, "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death."

Again, a heritage of suffering seems to be held out as the prospect before the Church, already in tribulation and poverty. "Fear none of those things which thou *shalt suffer*." Indeed, the very name "Smyrna" means "bitterness"—thence *myrrh*, which is always connected with suffering or death.

Here, then, I think, we have a thought which will be enough for our consideration—the mystery of suffering. At the outset we may never forget that, looked at broadly, suffering in all its forms is penal.

[1] In this Reading use has been made of Dr. NEWMAN's *Parochial and Plain Sermons*.

Before our first parents was set, in the most emphatic manner, the choice of life and death. Life they knew of, life they felt within them. Death they could only have thought of as the creeping upon *themselves* of the fate which was already the lot of the animal world around. "Life" was the gift of God — death was (however blindly chosen) the choice of man; chosen, we know, not for its own sake, of course, but as the sure accompaniment of the withdrawal of the will from the obedience required by God. In that choice lay hidden everything between the two extremes of life and death. Death was but the final goal to which sufferings of all kinds should tend.

Why suffering is allowed we are nowhere told—all we see clearly from revelation is, that man by sin became heir to suffering and death; and that even in redemption suffering was not removed, but the undoing of the curse was by the bearing of the curse itself.

The kingdom of heaven, closed by sin, was only to be opened by the endurance of the sufferings brought into the world by sin; and even then those sufferings were not removed, but along the path of pain a light was cast, and a way was opened by which the very results of sin were made to work its cure and be its atonement.

And thus it is that, although, speaking generally, pain and death are now, and always have been, *penal*, yet so far as they touch the individual they are in no

sense sent as a result of personal sin, though many sins *do* bring their punishment of suffering even here.

By sin came death,[1] but "right dear in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints."[2] By sin came suffering, but even before the Incarnation it was true that "whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth."[3]

Here, then, we come to the mystery of suffering—which lies, not so much in the fact that suffering is the path to temporal death, but that suffering is, strangely, a mark of God's choice, and a way to overcome that which is called "the second death."

Why should the scheme of redemption have been one of suffering? Why should the Redeemer have chosen to be "clothed with a vesture dipped in blood"?[4] Why is it that all that "is needful for this sinful world, the life of our souls, the regeneration of our nature, all that is most joyful and glorious, hope, light, peace, should all flow from the wounds of Christ?"

We cannot tell: it is a mystery. All we can dimly see is that our hearts tell us that love longs to suffer for the beloved; that to suffer seems to us the truest proof of love, and "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son,"[5] to suffer and to die—to reveal to us that "God is Love."

However deep may be the motive of God in choosing a suffering life—and a painful death as the way to life—we know as a fact that He did so, and therefore a new

[1] Rom. v. 12. [2] Ps. cxvi. 13. [3] Heb. xii. 6.
[4] Rev. xix. 13. [5] St. John iii. 16.

light hovers around all pain, and illumines the valley of death.

If *He* chose to be perfected by suffering, then we can see that it may well be that the more we are conformed to His image, the more we shall be called upon to suffer. Has not this always been so? Immediately upon His Birth He brought the sword upon the Holy Innocents. His Blessed Mother had not clasped Him to her breast for many weeks ere she was warned of the penalty of the fearful privilege: "Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also."[1] Most of His Apostles, after lifelong suffering passed to a violent death. In particular, when the favoured brothers, James and John, came to Him with a request that they might reign with Him, He showed on what conditions alone it might in some degree be granted—that if they would reign with Him, with Him they must suffer first. Even the types of redemption were for the most part painful figures, involving suffering and death.

And lastly, it is the Cross of suffering that is stamped upon the brow of every child when it is made a member of Christ.

To the Church of Smyrna, then, tribulation and poverty were, indeed, riches; for they were the likeness on earth of Him Who revealed Himself as One "which *was dead*, and is alive"—One Who had Himself suffered, One Who had died. Our Lord had said when on earth, "Whosoever doth not bear his cross and come

[1] St. Luke ii. 35.

after Me, cannot be My disciple." Our Lord from heaven renews His teaching: "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer."

St. Peter had written: "Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings."[1] St. Paul teaches the same lesson in that text in which he speaks of taking up the remnant of Christ's sorrows, as some precious mantle dropped from the Cross, and wearing it for His sake: "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the Church";[2] and though he is speaking specially of persecution and other sufferings borne for the cause of the Gospel, yet it is our great privilege, as Scripture tells us, that all pain and trouble borne in faith and patience will be accounted as marks of Christ—grace-tokens from the absent Saviour, and will be accepted and rewarded for His sake at the last day. It declares generally: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee";[3] "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."[4] "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer."

Our Lord does not tell us to seek for pain, to wilfully encounter suffering, but only when in the course of His

[1] 1 Peter iv. 12, 13. [2] Col. i. 24.
[3] Isa. xliii. 2. [4] 2 Cor. iv. 17.

good providence these are our portion, we are to "fear none of" them. But still, in all ages, the saints of God have been constrained to suffer something for their crucified Lord, and have felt a longing to share in His Passion. Hence came the mortifications we read of in the lives of all the saints, from St. Paul down to the present day.

We say, then, while sin is the original cause of suffering, yet its infliction on individuals is often a mark, not of God's anger, but of His love.

Of almost every saint our Lord has said, as of St. Paul, "He is a chosen vessel unto Me. . . . for I will show him how great things he must suffer for My Name's sake."[1]

Yet, while we bear this fully in mind, we must never forget that, after all, around suffering and around death there lingers the curse of sin.

This aspect of the mystery of pain and death is one of great importance The Church—our guide—never pretends that death is a cheerful or trivial thing. It is not; it is a curse, the sting alone of which has been removed.

Hence the true beauty and supernatural instinct of the Church in all ages in marking her offices of the dead with a mournful and even gloomy character, only now and then relieved by notes of humble hope and trust as she looks on to the end and sees "the crown of life."

[1] Acts ix. 15, 16.

But the prevalent tone—whether in our own office or in the ancient ones of the East and West—is of solemn contrition and humiliation: "In the midst of life we are in death: of whom may we seek for succour, but of Thee, O Lord, Who for our sins art justly displeased?" or the frequent "Requiem æternam dona eis Domine"; and the Matin Lessons from the book of Job, ever increasing in holy fear, until in the Mass for the Dead the mournful and solemn notes of the "Dies Iræ" seem to be filled with the spirit of the Judgment, and leave us prostrate before the great white throne, while the heavens and the earth flee away in wondering awe, and we—poor, vile, and only just saved—wait there, hardly daring to hope, and yet looking (oh, how anxiously!) for "the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ."[1] This, after all, we feel is the real way of looking at death. It *is* an awful punishment, and though the way to eternal life is open, still it is by a path of death which sin, and not God, has discovered. The Church follows us along that way, clothed in her black vestments, and breathing her most solemn prayers. It is only when the dark valley has been passed through, when the soul has suffered its last cleansing, that the land is reached where "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."[2]

[1] Jude 21. [2] Rev. xxi. 4.

PASSAGES FOR READING.

(1) Rev. ii. 8. The title "First and Last"—like the other titles used in addressing each Church—is taken from those named in Revelation i. 11–20. The Divine Nature of our Lord has neither beginning nor ending. All creatures have their beginning in God—all come from God and return to Him, in fulfilling the end for which they were created.

Is my life an orderly movement towards God?

(2) Rev. ii. 8. The words "which was dead, and is alive" are a memorial of the law of redemption. Christ suffered and died—but He lives. "All who will live godly" shall suffer some kind of persecution, but they will overcome in Christ's strength, and so will escape "the second death"—the loss of the spiritual life.

To the persecuted Church of Smyrna it was an encouragement to be reminded of the persecution, death, and victory of Jesus Christ.

(3) Rev. ii. 9. God knows our works, whether good or bad. The Jews boasted of being the chosen people of God, but our Lord calls them "the synagogue of Satan," because Satan used them as his agents to persecute Jesus Christ in His Church. We learn that "Churchmen," if they have not the spirit of Christ, may be used by Satan to oppose Christ.

(4) Rev. ii. 10. Compare with St. Matthew x. 28. Any suffering borne for "the testimony of Jesus Christ" will merit great reward. Our Lord never disguised the fact that His service would involve suffering. (See St. Matt. v. 11, xvi. 24; St. John xv. 20.)

(5) Rev. ii. 10. Here we see it is *Satan* who stirs up persecution; but his power is only for a short time—as it were but "ten days" out of all time and eternity. (See Rev. xii. 10.)

Time is short, eternity is long! We may soon be "where the wicked cease from troubling," and "the weary be at rest."

(6) Rev. ii. 10, 11. Our Lord exhorts them not even to fear death, but to be faithful even if their faithfulness means martyrdom. He already holds out "the crown of life" to encourage them, and not only them, but all who love Him shall be crowned with life eternal. Think of St. Paul's words: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing." (2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.)

For the meaning of "second death," see Rev. xx 13, 14, and xxi. 8.

XXII.

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

Epistles to the Seven Churches

(3) PERGAMUM

Epistle to the Church in Pergamum

Rev. ii. 12–17.

ANALYSIS.

Who speaks? "He which hath the sharp sword with two edges."

He praises: because "thou holdest fast My Name, and hast not denied My faith," in spite of persecution, and the martyrdom of some.

He blames the toleration of idolatry, fornication, and false teachers.

He commands: "Repent!"

He threatens: "I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth."

He promises "to him that overcometh," the "hidden manna," and the "white stone" bearing the "new name."

XXII.

"To the Angel of the Church in Pergamum"

IN the third Epistle we shall find it convenient to consider, first, its practical bearing upon the literal Church of Pergamum.

To this Church our Lord appears as He that hath "the sharp two-edged sword." Against Smyrna the sword of man has been raised in persecution, and the result seems to have been a drawing near to our Lord; but here the two-edged sword of the Lord is drawn, and He stands confronting those who are moving toward some compromise with the corrupt heathen world, even as His angel stood in the way of Balaam.

Pergamum had once been the centre of paganism. The magnificence of its old rulers—the Attalic kings—had raised it to be a city of great splendour. Pergamum had become a city of temples, devoted to a very sensual form of worship; it was looked upon by the pagan world as an especially sacred place, and still, at the time of the vision of the Apocalypse, retained much of its ancient prestige. It was said to be more devoted to the worship of the pagan gods than any other city

of Asia. A modern writer tells us that "it was a sort of union of a heathen cathedral city, a university town, and a royal residence embellished during a succession of years by kings who had a passion for expenditure, and ample means for gratifying it." Its inhabitants were charged by common consent with the maintenance of some important worship on behalf of Asia. As to what this worship was we are left in uncertainty; but the Apocalypse does not leave us in any doubt regarding the supreme importance to heathendom of the city of Pergamum, since it reveals the fact that "Satan's throne" was, in some sense, especially there. This reference to "Satan's throne," or "seat," may be due to the fact that the worship of Asclepius had acquired so much importance at Pergamum that he was called *Pergameus Deus*, and "the Saviour" (Σωτήρ). It is more probable, however, that no one pagan deity is referred to in this Epistle to the Church in Pergamum. From an inscription of the time of Marcus Antoninus we learn that Zeus, Athene, and Dionysus were, equally with Asclepius, the guardian gods of Pergamum. The serpent was the characteristic emblem of these deities, and a consecrated serpent was especially the symbol of the Bacchic orgies. What is said of "the doctrine of Balaam" would be more appropriate to the worship of Dionysus and other pagan gods than to the worship of Asclepius.

What, however, we are to understand exactly by the expression "Satan's *throne*" is not clear, but when we

remember that even so lately as the seventeenth century[1] after Christ the actual worship of Satan had its altars in Europe, we need feel no surprise if, in the days of the decline of Paganism, a city was left especially given up to the worship of the evil spirit.

The Holy Scriptures plainly recognise spiritual existences behind the idols of heathenism, and affirm that these existences are demons. St. Paul more than once takes this for granted, and forbids those who partake of the table of demons to be also partakers of the Lord's table.[2] There is not the least doubt from the records of Scripture, from secular history, and, indeed, from much that is now going on in the world, that the evil spirits which haunt the air are beings, malignant indeed, but perfect in order and organisation, thirsting for the subjugation of the human race, members of a kingdom of darkness, whose aim is not merely to revolt against the supreme and true God, but to draw away the human race from the obedience of Christ, and by various means to attach it to Satan.

The crowning temptation of our Lord in the wilderness was to give worship to the fallen archangel.

This effort of Satan to obtain homage may have been especially successful at Pergamum, and therefore it may be that this city is spoken of as one where Satan's seat was, and again, in the verse following, as the place "where Satan dwelleth."

[1] There seems to be an insignificant revival of this cultus of the devil in modern Satanism.

[2] 1 Cor. x. 21

In such a city outbursts of fanatical zeal would be likely to occur, and this Epistle intimates that the followers of Christ had recently suffered from them.

But the Church had held fast to the Name and faith of her Lord: "I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is, and thou holdest fast My Name, and hast not denied My faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth. But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam. . . . Repent: or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against thee with the sword of My mouth."

To see the exact force of these words, and so the sin suggested, we must recall the story of Balaam, whose "doctrine" is here mentioned.

Balak, we know, desired to subdue the Lord's people, and, in order to achieve his purpose, he tried to bring a curse upon them by means of the prophet Balaam.

We remember that Balaam was hindered from pronouncing the curse, and, failing this, he seems to have been the one to suggest that the Israelites should be entangled in sin with their enemies and drawn into their idol worship. In this way Israel might be deprived of the favour of God, Who had defended them in the past and turned every attempt of Balaam to curse them into a blessing.

The thought, then, here seems this, that the Church of Pergamum, although it had stood firm against per-

secution, was in danger—now that the evil days were passing away and days of temporal greatness were perhaps dawning—of being seduced by sensuality into that very apostasy from God which persecution had been powerless to effect.

Balak had failed against God's people, but a Balaam, or perhaps many a one of like spirit, is there (may be even in high repute and favour) to suggest a toleration of evil, a mixing with God's enemies, and a laxity of life, which shall surely in the end lead the heart and intellect away from God, and in consequence attach it to the hostile deities, the demons of heathen worship.

We learn from St. Paul's Epistles that many Gentile converts were inclined to allow themselves the social intercourse with the heathen that centred around the banquets celebrated in honour of the gods. To the Jewish convert this was no temptation. His whole tradition as a Jew had prepared him for the total separation from all association with idol-worship. "It was otherwise with the proselytes from the heathen world, with the Gentile Christians gathered in, it might be, to the Church of Christ out of some corrupt and luxurious Greek city, as Corinth for example. Refusal to partake in the idol-meats was, for one of these, refusal to partake not merely in the idolatry which he had renounced, but in very much else which he was not at all so entirely prepared to forego. It involved abstinence from almost every public and every private festivity, a withdrawal in great part from the whole

social life of his time; for sacrifice had, in one way or another, bound itself up in almost every act of this social life."[1]

We have, in the writings of antiquity, abundant evidence of the sensual indulgence connected with these banquets. The early fathers, and notably St. Clement of Alexandria, strongly denounce the heathen banquets and festivals as leading to gluttony and every kind of impurity.

And now, what is the lesson? or, rather, what lesson from among the many to be learnt shall we draw from the Epistle to the Church at Pergamum?

A glance at the history of the Church and its woeful divisions certainly furnishes a sad commentary on this Epistle.

The falling away—which our Lord foretold when He asked that strange question, "When the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?"[2]—was surely, if imperceptibly, beginning even when this letter of warning was sent by our Lord to His Church; but we pass on a few centuries before we see much of this doctrine of Balaam and its progress.

We have but to look on to the time when fiery persecution had in a measure passed by. "The martyred apostles were gone to their rest, and the ashes of the flaming bodies used by the cruel Nero to illuminate his gardens had now lain cold for more

[1] Archbishop TRENCH, *Commentary on Epistles to the Seven Churches*, p. 129.

[2] St. Luke xviii. 8.

than two centuries. The cruelties of Domitian, Trajan, and Hadrian were almost forgotten. Lyons had long ceased to shudder at the agonies of Blandina and Pothinus; nor would Perpetua be any more worried by the savage beasts of the amphitheatre, or pierced by the sword of the gladiator. Sebastian had endured his second martyrdom, and the last sigh of Timothy and Maura had ascended to God from their crucified bodies."[1]

A new era had commenced. Satan had stayed the persecution which had proved so ineffectual. The blood of the martyrs had been the seed of the Church, some more subtle device is needed, and so we find that what persecution could not bring about was in a great measure effected by prosperity and the seductions of worldliness.

Balaam, we read, "saw the Angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand,"[2] but his desire for worldly riches could not be checked. He sought the forbidden gain in spite of all proofs of Divine displeasure, and in the end it is written of him who had prayed that beautiful prayer that he might "die the death of the righteous,"[3] "Balaam also, the son of Beor, the soothsayer, did the children of Israel slay with the sword among them that were slain."[4]

The sword of warning unheeded becomes the sword of punishment.

[1] PEMBER, *The Great Prophecies*, p. 356.
[2] Num. xxii. 31.
[3] Num. xxiii. 10.
[4] Joshua xiii. 22.

Is it, then, without meaning that, to those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, Our Lord appears as He "which hath the sharp two-edged sword," and that the threat came, I "will fight against them with the sword of My mouth"? Of Him it may be said, "He beareth not the sword in vain."[1]

But the sword is not only the symbol of destruction, but also of division; and it is in the divisions of Christendom that we see already the punishment of the worldly spirit creeping into the Church.

And, once again, what is true of the Church is true of portions of it. The great Religious Orders, in their first days of separation from the world, were strong and full of the power of the Holy Ghost; and yet whoever reads their history marks the decay of discipline just when they began to be too much at ease in the world; and the result is the same—division!

Laxity has called for reform, and the reform has been only accomplished at the price of unity. But, to come nearer home still, is it not the history of many a soul? At the beginning of conversion, in the early days of spiritual life, we were perhaps all for God; great temptations were overcome, the hostility of the world bravely borne—but then? The opposition ceases, the fault seems vanquished, and we say "peace."

We know the rest—some more subtle temptation yielded to, some unfaithfulness to grace, and then we suddenly wake up, and realise that our heart is no

[1] Rom. xiii. 4.

longer all for God, and we learn (happy if it be so!) that there can be no truce with the enemies of God; that to make peace is, in fact, to surrender.

Let us then strive, in our Lenten self-examination, to find out how far the warning given to the Church at Pergamum may be needed in our own case, so that when He comes for judgment, instead of fighting against us with the sword of His mouth, He may give us of "the hidden manna," the sweetness of Himself, and "the new name," which are here promised "to him that overcometh."

PASSAGES FOR READING.

(1) Rev. ii. 12. The "sharp sword with two edges" and "the sword of My mouth" recall the words in Hebrews iv. 12, 13. The Word of God reproves the soul that is turning from God. The same Word, whose reproof we slight now, will hereafter rise up to condemn and destroy. (See St. John xii. 48.)

(2) Rev. ii. 13. "Satan's seat," or "throne," is set up in the evil world and the evil heart. Satan can dwell in no heart without the consent of the will of man; but if the Spirit of God be not in us, the evil spirits will certainly occupy His place. (See St. Matt. xii. 43–45.) The soul of man cannot remain "*empty*, swept, and garnished."

(3) Rev. ii. 13. Many hold fast to the Christian name who are allowing the power of the Christian life to be weakened by worldliness and sensuality of one kind or another. The story of Samson is the history of many a life that once had in it the power of an endless life, but is now

blind to the things of God and deprived of all freedom. (See Judges xvi.)

(4) Rev. ii. 14–16. Balaam died fighting against God's people. The whole story should be studied. (Numbers xxiv. 14; xxv. 1; xxxi. 8.) The threat, "I will fight against them with the sword of My mouth," must refer to Balaam's death, for we read, "Balaam, the son of Beor, they slew with the sword."

(5) Rev. ii. 17. What is "the hidden manna"? Is it not the Beatific Vision? In the Tabernacle the manna was laid up before the Lord in the Sanctuary. In the Blessed Sacrament the heavenly manna is the hidden Presence of our Lord. What is hidden now shall hereafter be revealed.

> "Jesu, Whom, thus veiled, I must see below,
> When shall that be given which I long for so?
> That at last beholding Thy uncovered face,
> Thou wouldst satisfy me with Thy fullest grace."

They who have refused to be partakers in the table of demons are made to sit down at the marriage-supper of the Lamb.

(6) Rev. ii. 17. What is "the white stone"? This, too, seems a further revelation of God to the soul, signified by the name known to the High Priest, and graven upon the breastplate of old.

XXIII.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

Epistles to the Seven Churches

(4) THYATIRA

Epistle to the Church in Thyatira

Rev. ii. 18–29.

ANALYSIS.

Who speaks? "The Son of God, Who hath His eyes like unto a flame of fire, and His feet are like fine brass."

He praises the love, service, faith, patience, and other works of this Church.

He blames some toleration of corruption in doctrine that led to fornication, and partaking in idolatry, as well as the refusal to repent.

He threatens "great tribulation" unless they repent, and the death of the children of the evil prophetess.

He commands those who have not yet so fallen, "that which ye have already hold fast till I come."

He promises him "that overcometh and keepeth My works unto the end," "power over the nations," and that He will give him "the morning star."

XXIII.

"To the Angel of the Church in Thyatira"

THE town of Thyatira[1] is situated about fifty-eight miles to the north-east of Smyrna, on the road from Pergamum to Sardis. It seems to have held a place of quite secondary importance among the towns of Asia Minor.

Our Lord appears to the Angel, or Bishop of this Church, as One "Who hath His eyes like unto a flame of fire, and His feet are like fine brass."

"The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good."[2] The all-seeing eyes of the Lord represent His Divine Nature, by which as God He knows all things, so that nothing is hid from His sight. The feet of brass are in Holy Scripture symbolic of great purity. In the vision of Ezekiel the Cherubim have feet "like the colour of burnished brass."[3] The Prophet Daniel beholds also in a vision "a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz; his body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of

[1] Now called Akhissar. [2] Prov. xv. 3. [3] Ezek. i 7.

fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass."[1]

We have in the Apocalyptic vision the same figure, symbolising the union of the Divine and human natures in the Person of the Son of God. The "eyes like unto a flame of fire"—His omniscient Divinity; the feet "like fine brass"—His contact with the earth by the Sacred Humanity.

Our Lord had reproved the Church of Ephesus for lack of love, but here He has no such complaint: "I know thy works, and charity, and service." It is noticeable how charity is linked here with service. In those who had left their first love it would seem that this departure was known by the lack of those active ministrations of love and kindness that were so often commanded by our Lord. The Church of Thyatira has not left her first love—she is full of deeds of charity. "I know thy works, and charity, and service." "The 'charity' or love being the more inward thing, '*service*' (*διακονία*) the outward ministrations, the helps of all kinds shown first to the household of faith and then to all others in which this 'charity' found its utterance. (Acts xi. 29; 1 Cor. xvi. 15; Heb. vi. 10.)"[2]

Again, we may notice how our Lord here commends the love that manifests itself in good works

[1] Daniel x. 5, 6.

[2] Archbishop TRENCH, *Commentary on the Epistles to the Seven Churches*, p. 145.

before noticing the faith and patience of this Church. His words are a confirmation of the teaching of the great Apostle St. Paul: "Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity."[1] The faith and the zeal of the Church of Ephesus are commended, but she is spoken of as a "fallen" Church because of her departure from the first works of love. The faith and patience of the Church in Thyatira are also praised, but only because they sprang from love. Faith—true, living faith—is that which "worketh by love."[2] These words, "I know thy works, thy charity, and thy service, thy faith, and thy patience,"[3] are a commentary upon the teaching of the Apostle, "Though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing." Philanthropy is good, but it is not necessarily the same as charity. Charity is rather a philanthropy that springs from the love of God. It is the practical expression of the second of the two great commandments, and closely associated with the first: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God—thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." The latter cannot be kept apart from the former, and the profession of the love of God is a delusion if it does not lead to the love of our neighbour.

[1] 1 Cor. xiii. 13. [2] Gal. v. 6.

[3] R.V.: "Thy charity and thy service, thy faith and thy patience." The article prefixed to all these words shows that the concluding σοῦ belongs to them all.

There are very many persons who forget this. They will attend church, repeat prayers, and go through a great deal of the routine of the religious life, but they will not sacrifice self in the service of their neighbour for God's sake. For this reason the time of Lent is given to us by the Church that we may examine ourselves. Do we give of our money, as far as we can, to assist the poor and the work of the Church? Few, if any, Christians should allow their standard of almsgiving to fall below that commanded of old. We should endeavour to give at least the tenth to God in some shape or another, and add to this tithe an "offering." A good rule observed by some servants of God is to add a shilling to every pound of their tithe, and to keep this tithe and offering apart as God's money, and devote it to some good work.[1] The poor we have always with us, and our charity to them may often well begin "at home" in the circle of our own kindred; but, whether this be so or not, we should surely not "rob God" of His tithe or be unwilling to add some offering, if our love and service are to be pleasing in the sight of God. Prayer and fasting are good works, but so also is almsgiving, and the three must stand—as far as our will goes—together.

Besides these "three notable duties" there are other forms of "service" that may not be refused lightly. To very many persons there is offered the opportunity of personal service of Jesus Christ in the poor, the sick,

[1] 1 Cor. xvi. 2.

and the young children. Do we not too easily excuse ourselves from doing what we might in this kind of service because we are unwilling to put ourselves to any personal trouble or inconvenience? And yet can we forget the condemnation implied in our Lord's words, "I was an hungred, and ye gave Me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me not in: naked, and ye clothed Me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited Me not. . . . Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to Me."[1] These words were not addressed to the clergy only, but to all who might have done these works of mercy and neglected them.

Our Lord passes from His commendation of the "charity and service" of the Church in Thyatira to its "faith and patience." The Church and each member of it must endure "as seeing Him Who is invisible."[2]

Patience (ὑπομονή) means the perseverance in well-doing in spite of all opposition, all persecution and suffering. Patience springs from faith in God and hope in His providence. "If we hope for that we see not," writes St. Paul, "then do we with patience wait for it."[3]

"Blest is the Faith, divine and strong,
Of thanks and praise an endless fountain,
Whose life is one perpetual song,
High up the Saviour's holy mountain.

[1] St. Matt. xxv. 42, 43, 45.
[2] Heb. xi. 27. [3] Rom. viii. 25.

"Blest is the Hope that holds to God
In doubt and darkness still unshaken,
And sings along the heavenly road,
Sweetest when most it seems forsaken."

St. John, to whom this message to the Church in Thyatira is given, makes himself known as their "brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ."[1]

Our Lord has now spoken the message of praise to the Church of Thyatira, and He turns to that in her which is faulty. "Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce My servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not." It is not possible to say with certainty who is referred to by "that woman Jezebel."

"It may be well here to consider first the position which the literal and historic Jezebel occupies in the history of the Church of the Old Testament. As Balaam, in the earlier history of the children of Israel, was the author of the great attempt to introduce heathenism with all its train of attendant impurities into the heart of the Church,[2] so Jezebel in the later period of that same history. She was a daughter of Ethbaal, king of Sidon.[3] . . . Of this Ethbaal we . . . . learn that he was a priest of Astarte, and, by the murder

[1] Rev. i. 9. [2] Rev. ii. 14; Num xxv. [3] 1 Kings xvi. 31.

of his predecessor, Philes, made his own way to the throne and kingdom. Jezebel, so swift to shed blood,[1] is a worthy offshoot of this evil stock. Nor less does she attest herself the daughter of the priest of Astarte. Hitherto the worship of the calves had been the whole extent of the departure of the ten tribes from the Levitical institutions—the true God worshipped still, although under symbols which He had expressly forbidden; the law of Moses in the main allowed and kept, however there might be a certain amount of sinful will-worship mingling with and infecting all. But from the time of Ahab's marriage with the daughter of Ethbaal the apostasy of Israel assumes altogether a different character; the guilt of it is of quite another and an infinitely deadlier kind.[2] A fanatical promoter of the Baal worship,[3] overbearing with her stronger will the weak will of her despicable husband, having made her own the substance of a power whereof only the shadow remained to him,[4] animated with the fiercest hatred against the prophets of Jehovah, the last witnesses for Him in Israel, now that the Levitical priesthood had been abolished there,[5] she seeks utterly to exterminate these.[6] She was probably herself, like her moral namesake here, a false prophetess—a priestess of that foul enthusiasm. . . .

"Such was the elder Jezebel, the female antichrist of

[1] 1 Kings xvii. 4; xix. 2; xxi. 10.
[2] 1 Kings xvi. 31; xxi. 25, 26.
[3] 1 Kings xviii. 19.
[4] 1 Kings xxi. 7, 8.
[5] 1 Kings xxi. 13.
[6] 1 Kings xviii. 13.

the Old Testament. And the later, assuredly not a sect of evil workers personified, but some single wicked woman in the Church of Thyatira, inheriting from her this name of infamy in the Church of God, would seem to have followed hard in the steps of her Jewish prototype. (For a like transfer of an evil name, see Isa. i. 10; Ezek. xvi. 3.) Not only did she give herself out for a prophetess, but in one sense, as I take it, was such—no mere *teacher* of perverse things, employing her intellectual faculties in the service of Satan and not of God; but claiming inspiration, and probably possessing it, wielding spiritual powers, only they were such as reached her from beneath, not such as descended on her from above; for as at this time miraculous gifts of grace and power were at work in the Church, so were also the devilish counterfeits of these. And thus, by aid of these, she seduced the servants of Christ '*to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols*' (see *v.* 14).[1]"

We have to ask, then, was there any such woman known to history as occupying anything like the position of this mystic "Jezebel"? The fact that Archbishop Trench passes over any such consideration is in itself a warrant for great caution, and probably a proof that no historical evidence is forthcoming that would justify the identification of the Jezebel of the Epistle with any historical personage. The inscriptions found at Thyatira mention a priestess of Artemis. "Another

[1] Archbishop TRENCH, *Commentary on the Epistles to the Seven Churches*, pp. 147–9.

superstition of an extremely curious nature, which existed in Thyatira, seems to have been brought thither by some of the corrupted Jews of the dispersed tribes. A fane stood outside the walls, dedicated to *Sambatha* —the name of the sybil who is sometimes called Chaldæan, sometimes Jewish, sometimes Persian—in the midst of an enclosure designated 'the Chaldæan's Court.' . . . Now there is evidence to show that in Thyatira there was a great amalgamation of races. But amalgamation of different races, in pagan nations, always went together with a syncretism of different religions, every relation of life having its religious sanction. If the sybil Sambatha was really a Jewess, lending her aid to this proceeding, and not discountenanced by the authorities of the Judæo-Christian Church at Thyatira, both the censure (on this Church) and its qualification become easy of explanation."[1]

Lucian, in one of his Dialogues, describes his visit to a temple in one of the other towns of Asia Minor, in which there was a mixed population including numerous Jews. Cnidus[2] was a city of great magnificence, but its worship was not different to that in other towns. Lucian writes, "When it was time to set sail again (from Rhodes) I took them (*i.e.* his two friends) on board at their request, for like myself they were anxious to visit Italy. We resolved to put in at Cnidus to see the temple of Venus which contained a famous and beautiful work of art by Praxiteles.

[1] *A Concise Dictionary of the Bible.* [2] Acts xxvii. 7.

Guided, doubtless, by the goddess herself over a delightfully calm sea, we came gently to land. While the others went in search of provisions, I myself . . . walked round the town, highly amused at the licentious figures of earthenware, fit ornaments of a city sacred to Aphrodite." Lucian then goes on to describe the luxuriant flowers and fruit trees that adorned "the green turf" of the courts of the temple. The "myrtle with thick blossoms," the cypress and the plane tree, the laurel, the ivy and "the vine loaded with bunches of grapes" made, he says, this spot a "pleasant resting-place for those who desired it." "City people rarely visited the spot, but the lower classes thronged thither on feast-days to celebrate the mysteries of Aphrodite."

The low moral standard of popular paganism made the task of maintaining the Christian ideal one of peculiar difficulty. All the "first love" of the converts must necessarily be maintained if they were to live in such an atmosphere without injury to their spiritual life. The difficulty was intensified by the heresies that sprang up within the Church during the Apostolic age. Corruption of the faith was invariably allied with a lowering of the moral standard. This is emphasised in these Epistles to the Churches. In the message to three of the seven Churches—Ephesus, Smyrna, and Thyatira—moral deterioration is plainly denounced. In the message to the Church in Sardis and Laodicea a similar fault is implied. The expression (*v.* 24) "the depths of Satan" is, doubtless, a reference to the

claim of the Gnostic heretics to a deep insight into the things of God, and the mysteries of evil. The Gnostics advocated asceticism for a time, but very generally their teaching went hand in hand with great laxity of conduct. In the Church of Thyatira this corrupt teaching had been too easily tolerated, although many Christians in that city were still uncontaminated. Before the year 70 A.D. there was a distinct heretical sect known to the Church, and whose false belief and morality was considered in the first Council at Jerusalem. The Apostles, assembled in Jerusalem, had consulted together, and St. James, as the Bishop of that Church, summed up their decision in these words: "Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: but that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood."[1] We are told that this judgment was embodied in letters which the Apostles sent to Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia. The letters conclude with these words: "For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well."[2] It would seem that there is some reference to this Apostolic decree in the words of the Epistle

[1] Acts xv. 19, 20. [2] Acts xv. 28, 29.

to the Church in Thyatira. "But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak, I will put upon you none other burden." Then our Lord turns back again from the toleration of corruption in the Church to the thought of her good works, "But that which ye have already, hold fast till I come." Their charity and service, as well as their faith and patience, must be maintained, and, to help them to persevere, He reminds the Church of His second coming to be their Judge. It is ever the teaching of our Lord and of His Church that the entire work of sin is not to be abolished until He come. It is then that death shall be swallowed up in victory; then that the curse of sin, together with its penalty, will be entirely removed. The resurrection of the body is needful to the complete restoration of man to that image and likeness of God in which he was created. In this present life the one aim must be to persevere in well-doing. Those who are faithful in love and good works will, in the day of Christ, share with Him in His triumph, and in the government of His kingdom. "He that overcometh, and keepeth My works unto the end, to Him will I give power over the nations: (and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers): even as I received of My Father." "My works" are, doubtless, the works of love that have been already commended. They are peculiarly the

works done in imitation of Him Who "went about doing good";[1] works of kindness and of mercy, springing from the heart of the servant who has caught something of the fire of love that burns in the Sacred Heart of the Divine Master.

Our Lord promised to His Apostles that, if they were faithful to Him in His humiliation, they should hereafter share in His triumph. "Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as My Father hath appointed unto Me; that ye may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."[2] The Son of God now confirms this promise from heaven. "He that overcometh, and keepeth My works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: (and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers): even as I received of My Father." These words are almost identical with the words used by the Psalmist in reference to the reign of the Messiah: "Desire of Me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for Thy possession. Thou shalt bruise them with a rod of iron, and break them in pieces like a potter's vessel."[3] This triumph of Christ and His elect is the gift of the Eternal Father. Satan had offered to our Lord the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, but He rejected the offer. The

[1] Acts x. 38. [2] St. Luke xxii. 28–30. [3] Ps. ii. 8, 9.

kingdoms were to become His by the decree of the One God, Who is to be worshipped and served. This fact is emphasised by our Lord's words, "even as I received of My Father."

But there is added a further reward to him that overcometh, "I will give him the morning star."

In the Messianic Psalm cx., the kingdom of our Lord is spoken of in prophecy. The Eternal Father is represented as speaking to the Son: "The Lord said unto My Lord, Sit Thou on My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool. The Lord shall send the rod of Thy power out of Sion: be Thou ruler, even in the midst among Thine enemies. In the day of Thy power shall the people offer Thee free-will offerings with an holy worship: the dew of Thy birth is of the womb of the morning." It may be that there is some reference to this psalm in the words of the Apocalypse that promise a share in Christ's kingdom, and the gift of the morning star. We have certainly in each a reference to the rule of the Lord, and this rule is connected with a reference to the morning light. The words, "The dew of Thy birth is of the womb of the morning," would, perhaps, teach us that the refreshing grace of the Incarnation has come from the Source of all light. Jesus Christ is "the morning star," Whose advent declared the day of the Lord to be at hand. He, Whose "going forth is prepared as the morning,"[1] is Himself the "true Light"; but He manifested His

[1] Hosea vi. 3.

light more at one time than at another; more in the Transfiguration than at Bethlehem or on Calvary; more at His Ascension than at His Burial; and more in heaven than upon earth. To St. Thomas, after the Resurrection, He showed Himself as wounded; to St. Paul, after the Ascension, He manifested His Presence in a brightness above the brightness of the sun; and here in the Apocalypse we are told that when He appeared to St. John, "His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength."

This light is too overpowering for even the holiest of the children of men who are yet in the natural body. St. John "fell at His feet as dead." It is only to those who have attained the heavenly city that He can show Himself "as He is": "The city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of the Lord did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it."[1]

Jesus Christ illuminates the Church on earth through the instrumentality of her pastors. Hence, in the Apocalypse, "the Angels of the seven churches" are figured by "the seven stars." Jesus Christ, as "the Shepherd and Bishop" of souls, is therefore "the bright and morning star."[2] He has given Himself to His Church here on earth in the hidden mystery of the Eucharist; hereafter the veils shall be withdrawn, and He will give Himself—"the morning star"—to all who with love and

[1] Rev. xxi. 23, 24. [2] Rev. xxii. 16.

good works have waited in faith and patience for the dawning of the eternal day. "In Thy light shall we see light."

"By birth their fellow Man was He,
Their Meat, while sitting at the Board.
He died, their Ransomer to be;
He ever reigns, their great Reward."[1]

PASSAGES FOR READING.

(1) 1 Kings xvi. 31; xxi. 25. We need to be on our guard in all the relationships of life lest we too be "stirred up" "to work wickedness" by those who are perhaps very near to us. This lesson is plainly written for our learning in many parts of Scripture, from the time of the first sin onwards.

(2) Acts xv. 20, 29. Compare this with 1 Cor. x. 19, 20. We have not the same temptations now as the early Christians, for the society we live in is, probably, nominally at any rate, Christian; but the *principle* remains true. We must choose whom we will serve—the evil world or Jesus Christ; we cannot serve both. We cannot "be partakers of the Lord's table," and yet be at home with those who are His declared foes.

(3) Rom. ii. 1–10. Compare this with Rev. ii. 21. The goodness of God in bearing patiently with our sins should not lead us to think them of no importance; but rather, His goodness "leadeth thee to repentance." (See 2 St. Peter iii. 9.)

[1] "Se nascens dedit socium,
Convescens in edulium,
Se moriens in pretium,
Se regnans dat in praemium."

ST. THOMAS AQUINAS.

(4) Rev. ii. 22, 23. It has been thought that the punishment of the impenitent will be, in every instance, in some terrible distortion of their besetting sin. "Whatsoever a man soweth, *that* shall he also reap." So here, "I will give to every one of you according to your works."

(5) St. Matt. xix. 28. Here we are told by our Lord of the reward He bestows upon His servants. By "My works," in Rev. ii. 26, our Lord may refer to such good works as He Himself performed. He went about "doing good." (Acts x. 38.) In our own measure we may follow His example. (See St. Matt. xxv. 36.)

(6) Rev. ii. 28. The wicked are called "wandering stars." (Jude 13.) The righteous are said to shine "as the stars for ever and ever." (Dan. xii. 3.) Jesus Christ was foretold as the Star that should come out of Jacob (Num. xxiv. 17); a star led the wise men to Bethlehem (St. Matt. ii. 2, 9, 10); and here, in the Apocalypse, Jesus Christ promises the "morning star" to him that overcometh, and tells us that He Himself is "the bright and morning Star." (xxii. 16.) St. Peter also writes: "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts." (2 St. Peter i. 19.)

XXIV.

FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

Epistles to the Seven Churches

(5) SARDIS

Epistle to the Church in Sardis

Rev. iii. 1–6.

ANALYSIS

Who speaks? "He that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars."

He praises.

He blames the spiritual death of this Church: "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead."

He commands: "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, and are ready to die. . . . Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent."

He threatens: "If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief."

He promises: "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment, and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before My Father, and before His Angels."

XXIV.

"To the Angel of the Church in Sardis"

SARDIS was situated in the middle Hermus valley at the foot of the Tmolus, on a spur of which its Acropolis was built. It was the ancient residence of the kings of Lydia, and continued to be one of the greatest cities of Asia Minor till the later Byzantine period. Its importance was due to its situation on the high road that led from the interior to the Ægean coast, to its military strength, and to the extremely fertile character of the surrounding country. Sardis was the chief centre of Lydian industry, an important feature of which was the manufacture and dyeing of woollen stuffs and rich carpets.

From the time when Constantinople became the Eastern capital, the importance of Sardis was diminished. It nevertheless retained its titular supremacy in the civil order, and its rank as the ecclesiastical Metropolitan See.

To this important Church comes from the mouth of Him "that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars" the terrible message, "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead."

The Church in Sardis is faithful to "the letter" that "killeth," but knows nothing of "the spirit" that "giveth life."[1]

It was most fitting then that our Lord should here renew the revelation of Himself as the One "that hath the seven Spirits." If we inquire what we are to understand by "the seven Spirits," we may reply with St. Augustine, "The sevenfold working of one Spirit is so named by the same Spirit Who was with the writer, that he should speak of seven Spirits."[2]

Our Lord had the full and entire gift of His Spirit to bestow on each of "the seven stars" which "are the Angels of the seven Churches," but He finds in Sardis a Church from which the Spirit has in a great measure departed, and left nothing but a frigid corpse-like orthodoxy. The wedding garment has been rejected by some, and grievously stained by almost all; only a remnant has been faithful: "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments." The shepherd, from whom the Spirit of life has departed, has still a few of his flock who have kept themselves from the evil that is in the Church as well as in the world, "hating even the garment spotted by the flesh."[3]

There is a notable point of resemblance between the Churches in Sardis and in Laodicea. Both are cold and lifeless—both are apparently on such good terms with the world that they suffer no persecution. All

[1] 2 Cor. iii. 6. [2] Homil. cxxii., *In Joan.* [3] Jude 23.

the other Churches have to endure suffering for their witness to Jesus Christ, but in Sardis and Laodicea there is nothing of the sort. Does not this fact recall our Lord's words, "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets"?[1]

The evil spirit, not finding the Spirit of God in this Church, has left it alone. Satan, when the gates of the soul are thrown open to him, has no need to raise an army to force an entrance. There is a quaint legend, found in the *Lives of the Fathers of the Desert,* which illustrates this. The story runs that "a Solitary, a great servant of God, was led by his guardian angel into a monastery which was inhabited by a saintly community, all being entirely devoted to the service of God. On first setting foot on this holy spot, he was astonished to see it surrounded by such swarms of devils that they surpassed in number the flies which settle on carrion, or the bees that buzz round a hive. He saw devils in the church, in the choir, in the cloister, in the dormitory, in the refectory, in the cells; devils everywhere. But far greater was his astonishment when, being led by his angel outside the monastery, on his way through the city, he could see no demons, save that in passing the city gate he discovered a solitary one, who was lounging idle and unemployed. "But wherefore," he inquired of his angelic guide, "so many devils for a handful of monks, while there is but one for this vast

[1] St. Luke vi. 26.

city?" "Because," replied the latter, "the townspeople do the devil's will already, so that they have no need of the devil to tempt them; not so, however, the monks; they withstand him, and refuse to be his subjects. Hence these wicked ones gather together in great numbers around the Religious, and spare no pains to force their will."

In a word, then, it is but too true that Lucifer deals with us after the fashion pursued by princes with revolted cities, which are invested on every side by numerous armies, are battered by artillery, and at length forcibly brought into subjection by all the might of their arms. But when the city has surrendered, and the citizens have been brought back to their allegiance, the king sets a single governor over them, who rules them in peace.

Such was the state of the Church in Sardis when the ascended Lord looked down from heaven to see her works: "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." There are few passages in God's Word more full of suggestion for self-examination than these words. They bring before the mind's eye the picture of a Church not wanting in all the outward signs of life, well-organised, carefully observant of the whole letter of the ecclesiastical law in so far as it did not too roughly clash with the lax paganism of society; but a Church with no inward life, no inspiration of the Spirit, no burning love for Jesus Christ and for righteousness. The

Church in Sardis apparently *kept* the law, even as the Pharisees kept it, but the law was only kept, not fulfilled, for "love is the fulfilling of the law."[1] Hence our Lord found exactly this to be lacking, "I have not found thy works perfect before God." The condemnation of the Pharisee was not due to his careful observance of the minutiæ of the law, but to his entire disregard of the spirit which alone could quicken the observance of the letter. "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."[2] The fair fame of the Church in Sardis was in itself desirable and good—only it was not deserved. "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." Our Lord had said, "Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit."[3] Yes, it is known to God, if not to man. The Church of Sardis had a name for producing good fruit, but she could not deceive her Lord, although she had succeeded in deceiving the other Churches. Our Lord has again and again said He will "render to every man according to his works." This He, and He alone, can do, since no work is of any value in His sight that is not "good," and no work is good unless it is a true expression of the inward life of the heart. The Churches could look

[1] Rom. xiii. 10. [2] St. Matt. xxiii. 23. [3] St. Matt. xii. 33.

only on the outward show, but the Son of Man, Who "hath the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars," Who hath, that is, the Church and her spiritual life in His hand—He can search the heart. Hence He it is Who will come to be our Judge. For this reason St. Paul forbids the rash judgment by which we too often condemn one another. A Christian falls, perhaps, into some great sin—by a "great sin" is too often meant some act that society frowns at—and immediately he is condemned by his neighbours as a hypocrite, whereas, grievous as the sin may be, it is quite possible that the sinner may at heart be less an alien from God than the respectable society that condemns him. "Therefore," writes St. Paul, "judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, Who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God."[1] As it happened at Sardis, so it happens now; many have praise of men who have not praise of God: "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." On the other hand men would fain have God endorse their rash judgments, and are perplexed because He "receiveth sinners."[2]

St. John Chrysostom, writing in the fourth century, points out the danger that there is, and always must be, in allowing ourselves to be satisfied with outward observances—observances very needful, and absolutely right, but which are not in themselves "perfect before

[1] 1 Cor. iv. 5. [2] St. Luke xv. 2.

God," unless they are inspired by the Spirit of God. They who neglect the outward ceremonial and discipline of the Church are twice condemned—they neglect both the spirit and the letter; to those who are strict in regard to the letter, but neglect the spirit, our Lord says, "These things ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."

The daily Eucharist and Choir Offices, the frequentation of the Sacraments, the hearing of sermons, the reading of the Holy Scriptures, and all the outward worship of the Church and of the individual soul are *means* to an end, not the end itself. Lest we should forget this let us ponder over the words of St. John Chrysostom: "The Church is indeed in very evil case, although ye think her affairs to be in peace. For the mischief of it is, that while we labour under so many evils, we do not even know that we have any. What sayest thou? We are in possession of our churches, our Church property, and all the rest; the services are held, the congregation comes to church every day. True; but one is not to judge the state of a Church from these things. From what, then? Whether there be piety; whether we return home with profit each day; whether reaping some fruit, be it much or little; whether we do it not merely of routine and for the formal acquittance of a duty. Who has become a better man by attending (daily) service for a whole month? That is the point; otherwise, the very thing which seems to bespeak a flourishing condition (of the

Church) does, in fact, bespeak an ill condition, when all is done and nothing comes of it, but indeed as things are it turns out even for the worse. What fruit do ye get from your services? Surely, if ye were getting any profit from them ye ought to have been long ago leading the life of true wisdom, with so many Prophets twice in every week discoursing to you, so many Apostles and Evangelists all setting forth the doctrines of salvation, and placing before you with much exactness that which can form the character aright. The soldier by going to his drill becomes more perfect in his tactics; the wrestler by frequenting the gymnastic ground becomes more skilful in wrestling; the physician by attending on his teacher becomes more accurate, and knows more, and learns more; and thou—what hast thou gained? I speak not to those who have been members of the Church only a year, but to those who from their earliest age have been attending the services. Think you that to be religious is to be constant in church-going? This is nothing unless we reap some fruit for ourselves. . . . With us all has become mere customary routine, and a formal discharge of a duty; a thing we are used to, that is all. Easter comes, and then great the stir, great the hubbub and crowding of—I had rather not call them human beings, for their behaviour is not commonly human. Easter goes, and the tumult abates, but then the quiet which succeeds is again fruitless of good. Vigils and holy hymn-singing?

And what is got by these? Nay, it is all the worse. Many do so merely out of vanity."

St. John Chrysostom goes on to show how the Holy Scriptures which are read aloud in the churches should lead to amendment of life in those who hear them. The passionate may learn that "a passionate man is not seemly"; the covetous that God and mammon cannot both be served; the proud will learn that God resisteth them, and that pride is the beginning of sin; and since there is no fault for which Scripture doth not point out the remedy, St. John Chrysostom concludes that, "in a word, since it is impossible to recount all, let each choose out from the Divine Scriptures the remedies for his own hurts."[1]

Here we have, from the lips of a great saint and Doctor of the Church, a picture of a state of things in the fourth century tending to that death-like state condemned by our Lord in the message to the Church in Sardis, "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." But why go back to the fourth century? Might not the words have been written of many professing Christians in every single century from the beginning? Are they not in substance true of many in Christendom to-day? If so, it is no reason for undervaluing the daily services or the public reading of the Holy Scriptures—far from it. It is merely a call to self-examination, to ask each

[1] *Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles*, xxix.

one of his own heart, "Can it be said of me, 'Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead'?"

If we are not even nominally Christian, how profound should be our shame! if our Christianity is merely nominal, then let us pray earnestly to the Holy Spirit of God, sevenfold in His operations, to come and breathe the breath of life into our cold formalism. Let us take to ourselves the warning voice that now speaks to our inward ear, "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent."

Had the Church in Sardis once welcomed the gospel of her Lord, and been very zealous in His service? It would seem so from these words, "Remember therefore *how* thou hast . . . heard." St. Paul had written somewhat the same sort of reproof to the Galatians, who had received the faith with joy and yet had to some extent fallen away. "I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain. Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am; for I am as ye are: ye have not injured me at all. Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first. And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. Where is then the blessedness that ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have

plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me."[1]

Our own conscience will tell us how far our own spiritual life has degenerated, how far we need a like rebuke to that which St. Paul addressed to the Galatians and our Blessed Lord to the Church in Sardis. But there are "a few names, even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments," and it may be that for their sake a further opportunity to repent is offered to the Church in that city. Abraham had made intercession for Sodom, "Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure ten shall be found there. And He said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake."[2] There were apparently not ten righteous there, and the city was given over to the flames that destroyed it, but here in Sardis are found "a few names which have not defiled their garments," of whom their Lord says, "They shall walk with Me in white; for they are worthy."

They who have not lost their baptismal grace are, when absent from the body, "present with the Lord";[3] they walk with Him as their Friend and Master. They who have defiled their garments, they who have lost the grace of their Baptism, they too are not necessarily excluded from the home of God, but for them it is needful that they wash their robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb: "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment."

[1] Gal. iv. 11–15. [2] Gen. xviii. 32. [3] 2 Cor. v. 8.

For them is opened the fountain "for sin and for uncleanness";[1] for them the Good Shepherd seeks with an especial love, for He has told us, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."[2]

For them the "second plank" of Penance is thrown out, that they may save themselves in the shipwreck. "The centurion . . . commanded that they which could swim should cast themselves first into the sea, and get to land; and the rest, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship. And so it came to pass that they escaped all safe to land."[3]

The Font and the Confessional represent the cleansing of the whole of the white-robed throng who have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. It may be only in desire—and that implicit rather than explicit—that these two Sacraments of the Precious Blood have been used; but in will and desire, if not in actual fact, they have been the passport of all the redeemed who have passed from earth to heaven—for they represent Innocence and Repentance.

In the further promise—"I will not blot out his name (that overcometh) out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels"—we learn that the names of all the human race are written in the book of life, but that some names may have to be blotted out through their own refusal of the gift of God which is "eternal life through Jesus

[1] Zech. xiii. 1. [2] St. Mark ii. 17. [3] Acts xxvii. 43, 44.

Christ our Lord."[1] The will of God is to save all men; if any are lost it is because the will of God can be, and is, thwarted by the free will of man. God could only hinder this by the withdrawal of the gift of free will, or by overpowering it. As this would render the service of God merely mechanical and valueless, God does not allow Himself to do more than assist by His grace the will of man to conform itself to His own Divine will. Such a grace He sent by His servant John to the Angel of the Church in Sardis, "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain . . . remember . . . how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent." And so the Divine Master ends this Epistle to the Church of Sardis with gracious words of hope and love. "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches."

PASSAGES FOR READING.

(1) Ezek. xxxvii. 1, 2. St. John was "in the Spirit on the Lord's day" (Rev. i. 10) when he had the vision of the Apocalypse. Ezekiel is "carried . . . out in the Spirit of the Lord" to see this vision of the resurrection of the dead hope of Israel. The "dry bones" represent a spiritual death of a very complete kind.

[1] Rom. vi. 23.

(2) Ezek. xxxvii. 3, 4. "Can these bones live?" Can the soul dead in trespasses and sins be restored to the life of grace? Yes, but the work of conversion is a greater work than the resurrection of a dead body—it is the resurrection of the soul. The word of God is able to reach such a soul, to speak to conscience; but it may refuse to "hear the word of the Lord."

(3) Ezek. xxxvii. 5, 6. In the creation of man God breathed into him the breath of life—His Spirit. When this life of grace is lost it is only the return of the same Spirit of God that can restore life. This restored life will be one of faith, "Ye shall know that I am the Lord."

(4) Ezek. xxxvii. 7–10. Sanctification—the restoration of man to the perfection of his creation in the image and likeness of God is a gradual process. Let our prayer be, "Send forth Thy Spirit, and they shall be created, and Thou shalt renew the face of the earth."

(5) Ezek. xxxvii. 11, 12. We may also take this resurrection of the dry bones as the destruction of that formalism which disfigured the Church in Sardis, and which may perhaps be at the root of our own deadness to the things of God.

(6) Ezek. xxxvii. 13, 14. Those whom God raises to the life of grace here He will raise hereafter to the life of glory. Then He will grant us to live in our "own land"; then we shall praise Him for all He has done; "Ye shall know that I the Lord have . . . performed it." "They sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth." (Rev. v. 9, 10.)

XXV.

SIXTH SUNDAY IN LENT (1)

Epistles to the Seven Churches

(6) PHILADELPHIA

Epistle to the Church in Philadelphia

Rev. iii, 7–13.

ANALYSIS

Who speaks? He that is holy—true—and hath the key of David. He that openeth and shutteth.

He praises: "Thou . . . hast kept My word, and hast not denied My Name . . . thou hast kept the word of My patience."

He blames.

He commands: "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."

He threatens.

He promises: "I will make them (thine enemies) to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee . . . I will keep thee from the hour of temptation . . . Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the Name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from My God, and I will write upon him My new Name."

XXV.

"To the Angel of the Church in Philadelphia"

THE town of Philadelphia was built by Attalus II., king of Pergamum, and was situated about twenty-five miles from Sardis. This region is highly volcanic, and constant earthquakes have threatened Philadelphia with destruction. In spite of this and of its consequent poverty, the Church of Philadelphia has remained to this day, while the far more important and once flourishing Church of Ephesus has been blotted out of the map of Christendom. It is indeed a fact of great significance that the Churches which were blamed and commanded to "repent" have fallen into complete ruin, while the two that escape blame (Smyrna and Philadelphia) are still in existence. The original population of Philadelphia was Macedonian; there was, however, a synagogue of Hellenising Jews there, as well as a Christian Church.

To this Church, that was little in strength but great in fidelity to the gospel, our Lord speaks only words of praise. He reveals Himself as "He that is holy, He that is true, He that hath the key of David, He

that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth." Or, as it is more exactly, "These things saith He that is the Holy One, He that is the Truthful One," — the One Whom holiness makes it impossible that He should either deceive or be deceived. The Son of man claims to be the Holy God, Holy and Immortal, Holy and Strong; and, as such, the One Who is able to perfect this Church that has in itself but "little strength."

There are many interpretations of the words, "He that hath the key of David, He that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth." Many of the saints and doctors of the Church understand by "the key of David" the clue to the understanding of the revelation of God, especially that given in Holy Writ. David stands, they think, as the representative of those prophets of the Jewish Church who plainly pointed out the coming of the Messiah. In confirmation of this theory they quote our Lord's reproach to the lawyers: "Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge."[1]

Others understand "the key" to be Christ Himself, and draw attention to the words of the Vulgate, "*qui aperit*." Christ is the door, the key, and the key-bearer —He Who openeth.

Thus on the day of His Resurrection He appeared to the disciples, and opened "their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures."[2]

[1] St. Luke xi. 52. [2] St. Luke xxiv. 45.

He opened the intellect in order to lead it to faith—the will in order to lead it to love; He opened heaven to the righteous, and closed it to the impenitent.

Again, others (and with them St. John Chrysostom) understand this "key of David" to be the holy Cross; for the Cross is, as it were, the key of Christ by which He Himself has opened heaven to all believers; it is, moreover, the instrument of the omnipotence of our Lord, which is the royal key, that can open or close all things.[1]

"I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven."[2] Our Lord bestowed this promised power upon St. Peter and the other apostles when, after His Resurrection, "He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained."[3] Jesus Christ, as the Head of the Church, the supreme Pontiff, the chief Shepherd, the great High Priest, is the true key-bearer; only in so far as He ratifies the sentence pronounced by His bishops and priests on earth can they be said to "shut" or "open."

Many who are absolved on earth are not absolved in heaven; many who pass away from the Church Militant without hearing the words, "I absolve thee," that Christ gives His ministers power and commandment to pronounce, are yet loosed from the bonds of

[1] Crux, ait, Christi est veluti clavis, qua ipse cœlum aperuit, et velut instrumentum omnipotentiæ Christi, quod est clavis regia, qua omnes res claudi et aperiri possunt. [2] St. Matt. xvi. 19. [3] St. John xx. 22, 23.

sin by the great High Priest Who reads the hearts of men. Hence the essential requisite for the forgiveness of sin is the sorrow or contrition of the sinner. An act of true contrition, apart from any use of the Sacrament of Penance, is effectual for the justification of the penitent.

On the other hand, the most minute confession of sin, followed by the pronunciation of the form of absolution by the priest, leaves the sinner still tied and bound by the chains of his sins if the confession has been made without contrition, or, at any rate, without what is called attrition.

So true are the words of Him Who is the Truthful One, He that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth.

Many a time has the Church endeavoured to shut the door of heaven unjustly. When Savonarola was condemned by Pope Alexander VI. to be burnt alive, as he drew near to the scene of his execution, the papal legate solemnly pronounced the sentence of excommunication, pretending to cut off the noble confessor of Christ from the Church Triumphant, as well as from the Church on earth:

> "One moment only, as it chanced, he heard
> The papal legate speak that monstrous word,
> 'From the Church Militant we separate,
> And from the Church Triumphant's high estate.'
> His voice flashed out, above the city's roar,
> 'Nay, from the Church Triumphant, never more!'"[1]

[1] *Savonarola*, Newdigate Prize Poem, by R. L. Gales, 1886.

In the first chapter of the Apocalypse, our Lord spoke of Himself as One Who had "the keys of hell and of death": He claimed, that is to say, absolute power over the Church Expectant. Now, in this Epistle to the Church in Philadelphia, He asserts His jurisdiction over the Church Triumphant. His power over the Church Militant here on earth is witnessed to throughout these Epistles by His commands, His reproofs, His approbation, as well as by the fact that He holds the hierarchy of His Church in His hand.[1]

It would seem from the words, "I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it," that our Lord had chosen the apparently weak Church in Philadelphia to do some great work for Him. His strength is ever "made perfect in weakness."[2] He uses the "things which are not, to bring to nought things that are."[3]

St. Paul, writing to the Church in Corinth of his own work for Jesus Christ, says, "I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost, for a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries."[4] Doubtless some such "great door and effectual" was opened by Him Who has "the key of David" unto the Church in Philadelphia; and in spite of their "little strength," and their many adversaries among "them of the synagogue of Satan," none shall be able to close this door. Indeed He promises that these very adver-

[1] See Chap. i. 16, 20; ii. 1; iii. 1.
[2] 2 Cor. xii. 9.
[3] 1 Cor. i. 28.
[4] 1 Cor. xvi. 8, 9.

saries shall "come and worship before thy feet"; He Who converted to Himself Saul the persecutor, and used him as "a chosen vessel" to do great things for the Gospel, can change even the most bitter foes of His people into submissive children of the Church.

Our Lord continues His gracious words, and promises that they who have kept the word of His patience shall find in the hour of trial that He is able to keep them from harm. To the Church in Sardis He threatened to come as a thief—as One Who should spoil them of that which they seemed to have. This threat must have brought to the mind of those to whom it was addressed our Lord's words in the Gospel, "Whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath";[1] just as the promise to the Philadelphians, "Behold, I come quickly," would recall the words, "For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance."[1] Let them only guard what they have for the short time that must elapse before His coming, and see that their reward is not taken from them by the cunning malice of their adversaries: "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."

To encourage this faithful Church our Lord promises that, however "little strength" they may have in this world, they shall hereafter be made strong in the Church Triumphant. "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go no more out."

[1] St. Matt. xiii. 12.

Ezekiel tells us the name of "the city of My God," when he writes, "And the name of the city from that day shall be Jehovah-shammah, The Lord is there."[1] The victor on earth is given the freedom of the city of God, "the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven."[2] That city, "having the glory of God," is nothing else than the vision of God, and union with God. St. John says of this city, "I saw no temple therein," and yet to him that overcometh is promised that he shall be made "a pillar in the temple of My God." What does this mean if there is no temple?

St. John himself explains:—"I saw no temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." He who is made a pillar in this temple is made strong in union with God and Jesus Christ. In God, here on earth, "we live, and move, and have our being";[3] in Him hereafter we rest securely; the union is eternal. "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the Name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from My God: and I will write upon him My new Name."

He that was baptised into the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost will, if he keep the crown of righteousness, bear that Name for all eternity. "The Name of My God"—that is the Name

[1] Ezek. xlviii. 35. [2] Rev. xxi. 2. [3] Acts xvii. 28.

of the Eternal Father; "the name of the city of My God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from My God"—that is the Holy Spirit's creation, the Church coming down from God with the gift of the Paraclete at Pentecost; "My new Name,"—that is the Name which is above every name, the Holy Name of Jesus.

The chief lesson to be learnt from the Epistle to the Church in Philadelphia, is the security of those who are faithful in that which is least, who use the little strength they have to "hold fast," and to guard the grace of God. They are under the protection of the Holy, True God; they are in His keeping Who holds the key of the city of God.

The work He calls them to none can frustrate, however much they may oppose it or hinder it. It may even be that some of the adversaries will themselves be converted by the example of the Christian life, and the power of that life. In every trial, in every temptation, they who keep patiently in the way of God's commandments will find themselves kept by God's good providence, for it is promised to such, "He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways." And when the end of the trial comes, "there remaineth a rest for the people of God." The wicked will cease from troubling, and they will then learn the secret of the Christian's strength and victory. "I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that *I have loved thee.*"

XXVI.

SIXTH SUNDAY IN LENT (2)

Epistles to the Seven Churches

(7) LAODICEA

Epistle to the Church in Laodicea

Rev. iii. 14–22.

ANALYSIS

Who speaks? "The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God."

He praises.

He blames: "Thou art neither cold nor hot."

He commands: "I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see . . . be zealous . . . and repent."

He threatens: "I will spue thee out of My mouth."

He promises: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne."

XXVI.

"To the Angel of the Church in Laodicea"

LAODICEA is the name of some eight cities founded in the later Hellenic period by the Seleucid kings of Syria. The particular Laodicea addressed in this last of the Epistles to the Seven Churches of Asia Minor is distinguished by the title of Laodicea ad Lycum;[1] it was founded by Antiochus II., and named after his wife Laodice. Its site—now called Eski-Hissar—is at the present day absolutely solitary and deserted. Laodicea was one of the towns on the great trade route from the Euphrates and the interior, and was situated midway between Philadelphia and Colosse. It is mentioned in St. Paul's Epistle to the Colossians: writing of Epaphras he says, "I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them that are in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis";[2] and again, "When this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the Church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea." Pliny speaks of Laodicea as a most renowned city—"celeberrima urbs." There seems good reason to suppose

[1] Owing to its situation on the river Lycus. [2] Col. iv. 13.

that the "Angel" of the Laodicean Church was none other than the Archippus mentioned in the Epistle to the Colossians. Immediately after the words quoted above, St. Paul continues, "And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it."[1] These words imply some doubt as to the efficiency of Archippus, and perhaps the praise in the context of the "great zeal" of Epaphras, who was "labouring fervently" for the Colossians and Laodiceans, may also have been a warning and implied reproof to the Bishop of the Laodiceans, if already he was showing signs of that lack of zeal and fervour for which thirty years later he was so strongly rebuked.

Our Lord speaks to the Angel of the Church in Laodicea as "the Amen, the faithful and true Witness." The word "Amen" was frequently used by our Lord as a preface to some of His more solemn utterances, "Verily, verily, I say unto you." Whenever these words, "verily, verily," occur, they are simply a translation of the Greek Ἀμὴν ἀμήν,[2] so that they might be rendered (as they are in the Douay version of the Bible) "Amen, Amen, I say unto you." The word Ἀμὴν signifies "verily, of a truth," and we also use it often at the end of prayers to signify "so be it." Used as a title it seems to be a declaration of the firmness, truth, and fidelity of the speaker. It signifies One Who speaks with authority; One Whose word shall

[1] Col. iv. 17. [2] That is the Greek form of a Hebrew word.

not be made void; One Who could say without fear of contradiction, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away."[1] As the "Amen," He is necessarily then "the faithful and true Witness," and is clothed with the attributes of God Himself. He is "the Beginning of the creation of God," because if "the Gospel of Creation" be the truth, the first design of God in creation was the Incarnation of His Son. It was the plan of God to dignify the creature by union with the Creator. All the lower forms of creation are represented in the body of man; all the higher forms in his soul or spirit, given to him through the inbreathing of the Spirit of God. The Eternal Son, by taking to Himself a human body and soul, has placed all creation in a new relationship with God. St. Paul develops this truth in his Epistle to the Colossians, where he writes of Jesus Christ, "Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: for by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist. And He is the Head of the body, the Church: Who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the pre-eminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell."[2]

[1] St. Matt. xxiv. 35. [2] Col. i. 15–19.

"I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would that thou wert cold or hot." Our Lord does not, of course, mean He wishes the Laodiceans had been "cold," but rather He expresses in these words the hopeless state of those who have known all the power of the Gospel, and have grown indifferent and careless. It is an everyday experience of the Church, that there are none so difficult to influence as those who know everything and believe and practise nothing. It is perfectly easy to see that there is nothing strange in this. The most valuable medicines lose efficacy when they are misused. In the same way those who have been saturated with all the truths of the Gospel, who have for long years frequented the Sacraments, attended retreats, missions, and services, must either become the better for these helps or become, humanly speaking, hopeless and incurable. The Church has lavished upon them all her care, all her graces, to no effect; and now there is nothing short of the miraculous that can rouse or kindle them. Such persons are conscious of no imperfection; they are absolutely self-satisfied; they not only—like the Church in Sardis—unwittingly deceive others, but themselves also. Such a spiritual condition is, indeed, terrible; it seems to be peculiarly displeasing to our Lord, for nothing could be more strong than the terms of disgust in which He speaks of the lukewarm, self-satisfied, nominal Christian: "Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of My mouth."

And yet He does not allow this apparently hopeless, self-satisfied Church to conclude that it is useless to try and amend; rather He addresses to it words of encouragement, and gives His most glorious promise and His choicest reward to the one who overcomes this deadly spiritual paralysis. "Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous, therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches."

What is known as spiritual tepidity is the great fault of this Church, even as it is now the great danger of the professing Christian. It will be well, then, to consider briefly the signs by which this tepidity in the spiritual life may be recognised, and the means to overcome it.[1] The first symptom will exhibit itself clearly

[1] The following includes an abridgment of some of the considerations in the *Directorium Asceticum* of Scaramelli.

and unmistakably in spiritual duties; for as soon as ever the purpose of seeking perfection begins to grow feeble, the exercise of meditation, prayer, spiritual reading, and attendance at the offices of the Church will be neglected; or, if not outwardly neglected they will be gone through with no real will, more from routine, in fact, or human respect, than from a desire to profit by them, or grow in the knowledge and love of God. Self-examination, which was once made with fervour and sorrow, will be either omitted, or made in a slovenly way, with no good result; the use of confession will be either given up or avoided for long periods, and when made, the confession will bear but little fruit. The inspirations of God and the reproaches of conscience will be met with irresolution, and the amendment of what is wrong will be continually put off until a more convenient season. There is, however, a need here of caution, lest a soul that is merely a prey to aridity, and not guilty of tepidity, be disheartened. In spiritual dryness and in tepidity alike it is true that every sensible affection and all feeling and relish for spiritual things disappears; but then there is this difference, that in aridity the will remains true and firm, and steadily fulfils every duty. In tepidity, on the other hand, the will sides with the emotions, and slackens its efforts, so that it soon becomes positively careless and indifferent as to all that concerns the really interior life of the soul. Aridity is no fault, and frequently is the cause of real progress, since the will

that perseveres in the service of God, without being in any way assisted by the feelings, is greatly strengthened, and has a well-grounded confidence as to its final perseverance. Tepidity, on the contrary, saps out the vitality of the spiritual life, weakens the will, and leads from the carelessness of venial faults to the black and disordered chaos of mortal sin. If we find ourselves apparently cold and lifeless, with no sensible relish for divine things, we can tell if this is the trial of aridity or the sin of tepidity by the way we act under these circumstances. If we find that we shorten or omit our prayers altogether, or merely go through them without the least care that our thoughts are far away from our petitions; if our will, that is to say, is at no pains to be faithful under this trial, then we are verily guilty of the sin of spiritual sloth or tepidity—a fault which, we may remember, when fully developed becomes one of the seven deadly sins that destroy the soul.

If, on the other hand, we find our will does not allow us to shorten or hurry our prayers, but in spite of every hindrance and all possible dryness we persevere in our customary spiritual exercises, carefully guard our thoughts, and painfully elicit by sheer force of will true acts of love to God, then we need have no fear. Our spiritual condition, like the temporal afflictions of Job, is a trial from which we shall issue with renewed powers.

Another sign of lukewarmness is the shrinking from retirement and quietness, and seeking ever after society and its amusements. The senses are no longer guarded,

the tongue is careless in speech, often speaking unadvisedly, often injuring the reputation of others, often grumbling. The little mortifications prescribed by the Church, such as the Friday abstinence, and the wholesome discipline of Lent, are easily put aside with a plausible excuse at first, and afterwards without a thought. In short the spiritual man is rapidly descending to the level of the natural man, and he is not likely to halt even there on the downward road.

The next step will perhaps be to think very lightly of sin, and to go very near to forbidden pleasures. The strife of the passions, hitherto held in check by Divine grace and the authority of the will, becomes now more tumultuous, and the weakened will does not find itself any longer capable of their control. Unless at this stage there comes some very unusually strong grace to the soul, there is now but a step between it and mortal sin. When once this step has been taken there is a great danger that it may never be retraced. The Holy Spirit says that the restoration of such souls is morally impossible: "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame."[1] These are terrible words, and we

[1] Heb. vi. 4–7.

can only fall back upon our hope in God that we may never pass the boundary line that cuts off a return to God. With Him all things are possible; and so there comes to the Church of Laodicea, that corresponds with this description in the Epistle to the Hebrews, a fresh call, "Be zealous therefore, and repent." "Be zealous"; it is still in your power, but the weak will must be aroused. That is the first step in a case like this—"*be* zealous." Use the will to retrace the steps that have been erring; be careful in prayer; be firm in the fulfilment of all spiritual duties, and this very effort to "be zealous" will open the heart to the grace of repentance. Do not, however, our Lord seems to say, wait for repentance first before you become zealous. If so you will wait in vain. The will must turn from neglect of duty to its fulfilment before the heart can turn from sin to God. "Be zealous . . . and repent." The difficulty, however, comes in at this point, for the self-satisfied soul is the most difficult of all to arouse. Cassian is of opinion that a thorough worldling will be converted and mount to the loftiest heights of perfection more easily than a monk, or anyone else who has fallen from fervour into lukewarmness; and he gives as the reason for this, that a sinner, at the sight of his wickedness, is more easily moved to compunction. . . . and so has less difficulty in passing on from repentance to self-amendment, and to making in the sequel rapid strides in the path of the spiritual life. On the other hand, one who from the

pursuit of perfection falls into lukewarmness can never bring himself to see that he is blind, and wretched, and in need of guidance, for he thinks himself an enlightened man, and hence the difficulty in retrieving his lost position.

The first point, then, in the recovery from tepidity is to arouse the will, to desire to escape from so dangerous a state. There are but two states for those who have been leading a religious life—lukewarmness and fervour. God is well pleased with the fervent; for the lukewarm He has expressed nothing but loathing, "I will spue thee out of My mouth." "This passage," writes Fr. Faber, "is without parallel in Scripture. God not only prefers coldness, but He rejects tepidity. Its turns Him sick Who is Eternal Love. The charity of the Heart of Jesus, our only home, cannot retain us. His disgust is too strong for Him to resist it; and He rejects us with an unconquerable nausea which even redeeming love cannot temper or allay. It is a most awful figure, and one which, but for His own word, we should not dare to have mentioned in the same breath with His adorable majesty. How much He must have meant to teach us by the singularity of that terrific language! Now God is infinitely just, therefore His hatred of this state cannot be too great. It is not in His majesty to exaggerate. But He is also infinitely forbearing, so that His punishment of this sin must be if anything short of its horrible deserts. What then must its real horror

be?"[1] Faber thinks that the cause of this hatred of lukewarmness is that it shows an appreciation of other things rather than of God. He sees in lukewarmness treachery, hypocrisy, and the profanation of grace. It is taking a liberty with the majesty of God and with His goodness.

Directly we come to the remedies, we feel how feeble they seem, and how little likely to help such a soul. However, if these fail there are no others, and so we must hope they may be effectual.

First, when the will is aroused, let the mind dwell upon the great truths—death, judgment, and the future state. Then we must humble ourselves in the presence of God and try to realise the need we have of His grace and help; in fact, try and force upon our soul a conviction of our sin and of our need of assistance.

Faber makes the second remedy to consist in "not having so many things to do," by which he means that time must be made for our duty to God.

The third is to be quiet, and not fritter our spiritual graces away in heedless gossip and worldly amusements.

The fourth is to persevere in our spiritual duties, prayer, reading of God's Word, and frequentation of the Sacraments, and this in spite of dryness.

The fifth is some sort of exterior mortification; by fasting, or by some other means to subdue the flesh to the spirit. This is especially put before each soul by the Church in the season of Lent, but we

[1] Fr. Faber, *Growth in Holiness*, p. 437.

must remember Lent is not the only time for such practices.

Faber concludes his treatise on lukewarmness with these words: "It is a great grace, a prophecy of a miraculous cure, to find out that we are lukewarm; but we are lost if we do not act with vigour the moment we make this frightening discovery. It is like going to sleep in the snow, almost a pleasant, tingling feeling at the first, and then—lost for ever." Great is the danger, but great also the reward to him that overcometh. It is nothing less than union with Christ in His final victory.

Let our prayer be that our eyes may be at least so far clear-sighted that we may see how we stand in this matter: "Lord, that I may receive my sight." Are we self-deceived, self-confident, and thus among those whom our Lord would rebuke? If so, He gives us yet another opportunity—this time of Lent. He is knocking now at the gate, perhaps fast-barred, of the soul. "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne."

The Present State of the Seven Churches[1]

"Heaven and earth shall pass away; but My words shall not pass away."

i. *Ephesus*, which contested with Smyrna and Pergamum the honour of being called the first city of Asia, had, by the fifteenth century (A.D.), "sunk into a wretched village, the name of which, Ayazaluk, is now known to be a corruption of the title of St. John, Hagios Theologos. The ruins of the temple . . . were formerly covered with sand by the river Cäyster, and its true site was unsuspected until the laborious excavations of Mr. Wood in 1869." Ephesus, therefore, no longer exists. To the Church of this once magnificent city our Lord said, "*Repent* . . . or I will remove thy candlestick." It has been removed.

ii. *Smyrna*—"in ancient times one of the most important, and now by far the greatest of the cities of Asia Minor—has preserved an unbroken continuity of record and identity of name from the first dawn of history to the present time."

This Church was found blameless by our Lord.

iii. *Pergamum.* "The ancient *name* is still preserved under the form of 'Bergamo.'"

This Church was called upon to "repent."

iv. *Thyatira*, known now as Akhissar, has a population of 6000. "The houses are built of earth or turf dried in the sun, and are very low and ill-constructed; but there are six or seven mosques, which are all of marble." There are said to be about 300 houses occupied by Christians. (Godet.)

This Church was called upon to "repent."

[1] Gathered from *Encyclopædia Brit.*, ninth edition.

v. *Sardis.* "Its site is now absolutely deserted, except that a tiny village, Sart, merely a few huts inhabited by semi-nomadic Yuruks, exists there."

This Church was called upon to "repent."

vi. *Philadelphia*, now called Ala-Shehr, stands "on elevated ground . . . and presents at a distance an imposing appearance. It is the seat of a Greek archbishop, and has five Christian churches."

It has an active trade, and the population is about 14,000.

This Church was found blameless by our Lord.

vii. *Laodicea.* "Its site, called by the Turks *Eski Hissar*, 'the old castle,' is now solitary and deserted. . . . Its ruins are of wide extent, but not of great beauty or interest."

This Church was called upon to "repent."

It is noticeable that Sardis and Laodicea were the two Churches suffering from formalism and lukewarmness.

Of Sardis our Lord said, "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead."

To Laodicea He said, "Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of My mouth."

The same kind of sin in each has met the same fate—entire destruction.

Holy Week

"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills."

1. (Monday) *Ararat.* Gen. viii. 1–6. The ark rested on Ararat, and when the waters had dried up from off the earth Noah built an altar there, and offered a sacrifice, pleasing to God.

Even so the Cross brings us to the everlasting hills, and its Sacrifice is as a "sweet savour" of rest. By the Cross we are made to rest upon the Mount of God.

2. (Tuesday) *Moriah.* Gen. xxii. 1–19. This story of the trial of Abraham is figurative of Calvary. The Son of God, bearing the wood of the Cross, goes up Mount Calvary. He is the Lamb that God has provided, but as He offers Himself freely He does not allow Himself to come down from the Cross, but actually dies upon it.

3. (Wednesday) *Horeb.* Exod. iii. 1–7. "The mountain of God." The love of God is as a fierce fire burning in the Heart of Jesus Christ. It is from this central fire of love that the Sacrifice of Calvary is efficacious, and it is this charity that constrains those who are sent by God to do His work, to suffer for His sake. "The love of Christ constraineth us," said St. Paul. The Sacred Humanity burned with this Divine flame.

4. (Thursday) *Sinai.* Exod. xxxiv. 1–3. On the two tables of stone were written the ten commandments. These were given on Mount Sinai. On Mount Calvary our Lord fulfilled perfectly the whole law by His entire obedience. The two

commandments, the love of God and the love of man, contain the whole law and prophets. The Sacrifice of Calvary was the supreme act of love to God and to man. So our Lord willed it to be continually represented in the Sacrament of His love instituted on this evening.

5. (Good Friday) *Pisgah.* Deut. xxxiv. 1–3. Our Lord beheld from the Mount of His Temptation all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. They were to be purchased by His Precious Blood—His death. After His death He would (having passed over Jordan) lead His people to the promised land. Both Moses and Joshua are, therefore, types of Jesus Christ—Moses *before* the Passion, Joshua afterwards.

6. (Holy Saturday) *Nebo.* Deut. xxxiv. 5, 6. God rested on the seventh day, and now on the seventh day He rests once more from all His work. Of this rest the burial of Moses is a type.

XXVII.

HOLY WEEK

The Seven Words of Creation and Restoration

THE FIRST WORD

Prophecy

"God spake once, and twice I have also heard the same; that power belongeth unto God; and that Thou, Lord, art merciful."

Creation

"Let there be light."

Restoration

"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

XXVII.

Darkness and Light

"THE earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day."[1]

It was through His Passion, more especially, that our Lord redeemed the world. Every action of His Incarnate Life was full of mystical power for the destruction of evil and the healing of the wounds caused by the Fall; but the Passion summed up and consummated all that went before it, and, in a certain sense, gave to the whole Incarnate Life of our Lord its meritorious power to work the salvation of men. In the Passion we have the energising force of the renewal and restoration of the world. It is the application of His meritorious Cross and Passion to the souls of men that imparts the new life of grace.

[1] Gen. i. 2-5.

In the beginning, when God would bring the heavens and the earth into form, order, and beauty, we read that "He spake the word, and they were made; He commanded, and they were created."[1] The words of creation were efficacious, they did not return to Him void.

So, upon the Cross, His seven words were words of power, full of deep significance. They link themselves with the words of creation. The words of creation are words of Almighty force—they give birth to the natural world. The words from the Cross are also words of power, but they are even more words of mercy. They proclaim the restoration of man, and the coming of the kingdom of grace. The power of God in creation is equalled by His mercy in redemption. "God spake once, and twice I have also heard the same; that power belongeth unto God; and that Thou, Lord, art merciful."

I.

"In the beginning"—at some far remote period unknown to man—"God created the heavens and the earth." We know not what catastrophe may have befallen these heavens and this earth, but we read that, at the period when the Book of Genesis begins its record, "The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep." We have in these words a vision of universal desolation; of a heaving, fathomless, incomprehensible abyss, a

[1] Ps. cxlviii. 5.

tumultuous-like ocean, a waste lighted by no beams of sun, moon, or stars, a chaos of darkness and disorder.

"And God said, Let there be light: and there was light." God, Who speaks, remains unseen, unimagined; but His approach is in itself a scattering of darkness, for He is Light. There is no sun at present—only the face of God. He draws nigh, covered "with light as with a garment,"[1] and at His *fiat* the light disperses the gloom. The darkness and the light are henceforth divided the one from the other. The light He calls Day—the shining; the darkness He calls Night—the veiled, the obscure.

II.

This darkness, which was upon the face of the deep, is a type of the natural darkness of the fallen intellect that is ignorant of God, and has not the light of faith. "Behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people."[2] Very often in Holy Scripture darkness is the symbol of sin, and the state of those who are separated from God. Satan is the prince of "the power of darkness,"[3] while in God there "is no darkness at all."[4] The "waters" represent the "people which sat in darkness," and in the "shadow of death."[5]

In creation it was the drawing near of God, and the utterance of His word that dispersed the darkness.

[1] Ps. civ. 2. [2] Is. lx. 2. [3] Col. i. 13.
[4] 1 St. John i. 5. [5] St. Matt. iv. 16.

In the Incarnation, the Eternal Word, without Whom "was not anything made that was made,"[1] drew nigh to the fallen world darkened by sin. He came as the Light of the world, and His coming dispersed the darkness. On the first Christmas night this effect of the Incarnation was symbolised when, to the "shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night . . . the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them."[2] The message to the shepherds was a call to them and to the world, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising."[3]

But if sin is darkness, sin is also ignorance. No man would sin if he knew God perfectly, and the beauty of holiness. The first sin was a seeking to be wise above the measure of God's will. Man sought for wisdom, but sought it through disobedience, and hence instead of attaining what he sought, his intellect was darkened. The more sin reigns, the more dense becomes the interior darkness. Sin hurries the sinner, who knows not where he is going, towards the rayless outer darkness where no light is, and the knowledge of God is lost in the blackness of despair. St. Paul

[1] St. John i. 3. [2] St. Luke ii. 8, 9. [3] Isa. lx. 1–3.

speaks of the Gentiles as "having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart."[1] This darkness of the understanding, more culpable in the Jews than in the Gentiles, culminated in the effort of the enemies of Jesus Christ to destroy Him. Men tried to put out the Light of the world; and, to those who sought His life, our Lord said, "This is your hour, and the power of darkness."[2] The interior darkness of the blinded heart of the chosen people of God was outwardly symbolised when, during the Passion, "there was a darkness over all the earth." The shadow of sin fell, as it were, visibly upon the world, and darkened it. It is true that this sin of the Jews in crucifying their Messiah was lessened by their ignorance, but that ignorance was not in itself altogether excusable, since it was in a great measure caused by their stubborn refusal to be convinced of the truth of the claims of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, their ignorance to some extent pleaded for their pardon, and St. Peter, speaking to the Jews, says, "I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers."[3]

III.

Now listen to the word that the Incarnate God speaks from the Cross: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."[4] He had said once

[1] Eph. iv. 18.
[2] St. Luke xxii. 53.
[3] Acts iii. 17.
[4] St. Luke xxiii. 34.

before, "He that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth."[1] Our Lord intercedes for His enemies, and pleads their ignorance as their excuse. He "made intercession for the transgressors."[2]

And shall His word be less powerful than that former word spoken long ago, "Let there be light"?

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do"; pardon their actions, since they are ignorant of the truth. And not only pardon the sin they now do, but remove their blindness, open their eyes, illuminate their intellect, that they may know Thee, "the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent."[3]

Our Lord on the Cross is the great High Priest, presenting Himself as the Victim for propitiation. He offers Himself in sacrifice—Himself, the "Wisdom of God"—that God may pardon and enlighten His children. Shall not the darkness of sin and its accompanying ignorance yield to this word from the Cross? Shall no illumination come to the darkened souls of men, that they may henceforth walk in the light?

Our Lord's words, "Father, forgive them," indicate the way in which the light must come. He had said once before, "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent." He had told them that, if they had known God as their Father, they would have known that His

[1] St. John xii. 35. [2] Isa. liii. 12. [3] St. John xvii. 3.

claim to be the Son of God was a true one. In the beginning the Father through His *Word* had dispersed the darkness that was over the waters; so now it must be from the Father through His Word that the light shall come to the darkened souls of the men who "know not what they do."

The original darkness over the face of the deep became the type of that original sin which wounded the intellect as well as the will of man. Our Lord prays for its pardon and its removal. If we ask whether the prayer was answered, we see in the next word spoken from the Cross that it was; but for us and for all the children of God the answer is embodied in a Sacrament—in that mystery of illumination which springs from the Passion—the Sacrament of regeneration. It is in Holy Baptism that we are made children of God. It is then that sin is pardoned, and the light of faith bestowed on the soul. "Darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light, and there was light." The Passion merited our pardon. The Holy Spirit has been sent forth to apply this in the "one Baptism for the remission of sins." In creation the Spirit of God went forth from the home of God, and "moved upon the face of the waters." When, through the sins of men, the waters again overwhelmed the world in the flood, the Lord God prepared an ark of salvation, and then from it the dove went forth, and moved over the waters

until they were abated, and a resting-place was found in the regenerate earth.

So, high above a fallen world, the ark of God—the Cross of Christ—rests on Mount Calvary, and from it has gone forth the Spirit of God, moving over the waters, baptising with them a fallen world, so that by regeneration He finds in it a home. Wherever He rests there is light, joy, peace: the light of faith, the joy of hope, and the peace of love. The mystery of Holy Baptism is well called the Sacrament of regeneration, for it is the means of our new birth, of our transference from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light. The Blessed Spirit of God broods over the waters of the font, while God Himself, by His Word, utters the new *fiat lux*, "I baptise thee in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." We can thus call God "our Father." That which happened of old happens yet once again; God separates His children from the evil that is in the world; "God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night."

But hear St. Paul's words: "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light."[1] Shall we not to-day, beneath the Cross of Christ, give thanks not only for our creation, but above all for God's "inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the means of grace" (of which Holy Baptism—the

[1] Eph. v. 8.

Sacrament of life and of illumination, is the first) "and for the hope of glory"—the hope that being cleansed from the guilt of sin here, and enlightened to know the only true God and Jesus Christ Whom He hath sent, we may steadfastly walk in the way that leadeth to eternal life, and be made inheritors of that heavenly city of which St. John writes, "The city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the Light thereof." Our Lord Himself has told us that "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved."[1] For this redemption we should give thanks "unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son: in Whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins."[2] And our prayer will be, "That it may please Thee to forgive us all our sins, negligences, and ignorances . . . and to endue us with the grace of Thy Holy Spirit, to amend our lives according to Thy holy Word."

[1] St. John iii. 17. [2] Col. i. 12–14.

XXVIII.

HOLY WEEK

The Seven Words of Creation and Restoration

THE SECOND WORD

Prophecy

"God spake once, and twice I have also heard the same; that power belongeth unto God; and that Thou, Lord, art merciful."

Creation

"Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters."

Restoration

"Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise."

XXVIII.

The Separation of the Waters

I.

"AND God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament; and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day."[1]

The first day of the creation ended not in darkness but in light. We come now to the second "day," the making of the firmament, or the expansion to divide the waters. "A new scene opens. The wild and waste landscapes of chaos stretch out, cleared of the mantle of mists and vapours till now lying dense upon them, and a wide expanse appears, bearing up the clouds into which these had been transformed. The blue sky overcanopies all, with its ministries of rain and dew, so grateful in the burning East; for the firmament is the storehouse of both, and it is thence that they drop fatness over the land. How the waters rise and are sustained aloft the simple Hebrew does not dream,

[1] Gen. i. 6–8.

except that it is by the power of God; nor does he know more of the aerial heights than that they are 'the expanse,' or 'the high,' in which the clouds and rains have their appointed place."[1]

There is a passage of great beauty in Mr. Ruskin's works, where he says, "I understand the making the firmament to signify that (so far as man is concerned) most magnificent ordinance of the clouds; the ordinance that as the great plain of waters was formed in the face of the earth, so also a plain of waters should be stretched along the height of air, and the face of the cloud answers the face of the ocean; and that this upper and heavenly should be of waters, as it were, glorified in their nature—no longer quenching the fire, but now bearing fire in their own bosoms; no longer murmuring, only when the winds raise them, or rocks divide, but answering each other with their own voices from pole to pole; no longer restrained by established shores and guided through unchanging channels, but going forth at His pleasure like the armies of the angels, and choosing their encampments on the height of the hills; no longer hurried downwards for ever, moving but to fall, nor lost in the lightless accumulation of the abyss, but covering the east and the west with the waving of their wings, and robing the gloom of the farther infinite with a vesture of divers colours, of which the threads are purple and scarlet, and the embroideries flame."

[1] C. Geikie, D.D., *Hours with the Bible.*

In the "Song of the Three Children" the Church invokes these waters, "O ye waters that be above the firmament, bless ye the Lord; praise Him and magnify Him for ever"; and the Psalmist calls upon them to praise God: "Praise Him all ye heavens, and ye waters that are above the heavens."

"Ye clouds that onward sweep,
Ye winds on pinions light,
Ye thunders, echoing loud and deep,
Ye lightnings wildly bright,
In sweet consent unite your Alleluia!"

"And God called the firmament Heaven." He gave to it the name which we now associate with the home of God and of His elect. The firmament, which was destined soon to be adorned with the bright, light-giving sun, with the moon and the stars, has ever been connected in our imaginations with that "bright home beyond the sky," of which it is said, "The Lamb is the Light thereof," where the Saints as stars shine for ever and ever. "God called the firmament Heaven."

The main work of this second day is, then, the separation of the waters; some remain below, some are raised above; and the firmament, or heaven, divides the waters.

II.

When we ask what we are to understand by the waters, St. John tells us in his Apocalypse, "The waters which thou sawest . . . are peoples, and multitudes,

and nations."[1] By the first word the light was created and was separated from the darkness. By the second word the waters themselves are divided—some taken up into the bright firmament of heaven, others left below. Understanding mystically the waters to be the peoples of the earth, we are taught how some are drawn upwards by the attractive force of God, and become the great "cloud of witnesses" that hover over the peoples and nations below. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews would have the Church take courage from the realisation of communion with the saints who are in the Church Triumphant: "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us."[2]

The waters often represent the Church on earth; the clouds, those who have entered into their rest. "Behold, He cometh with clouds"[3] is the message of the Apocalypse, and St. Jude tells us the clouds are "ten thousands of His saints."[4]

It is also noticeable how, more than once, the "waters below" represent the evil rather than the good. This is not only so in the Apocalypse, but elsewhere: "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest";[5] ungodly men are "raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame."[6] While, on the other hand, "the

[1] Rev. xvii. 15. [2] Heb. xii. 1. [3] Rev. i. 7.
[4] Jude 14. [5] Isa. lvii. 20. [6] Jude 13.

waters that be above the firmament" usually represent the righteous. The exception is in the Epistle of St. Jude, where he speaks of the wicked as "clouds," but he adds "*without water,* carried about of winds."[1]

Almost everywhere in Holy Writ clouds are associated with manifestations of God. The bow is set "in the cloud"[2] as a token of favour; the cloud protected Israel in coming out of Egypt;[3] clouds covered Mount Sinai when God spoke to Moses;[4] the cloud guided Israel;[5] the cloud filled the house of the Lord;[6] and, to pass over many more instances, we remember it was a cloud that overshadowed our Lord in His Transfiguration;[7] a cloud, in His Ascension, received Him out of their sight who watched;[8] He foretold that His coming again should be "in the clouds";[9] and the holy dead shall be "caught up . . . in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air."[10] We may remember also that, in the Apocalypse, the voices of the redeemed are as "the voice of many waters";[11] and St. John saw in that blessed land "a pure river of water of life proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb;"[12] but the same Apostle tells us that when he saw the new heavens and the new earth "there was no more sea."[13] The Church on earth had been taken up into the great multitude of all nations,

[1] Jude 12.
[2] Gen. ix. 13.
[3] Exod. xiv. 19, 20.
[4] Exod. xix. 16.
[5] Exod. xiii. 21.
[6] 1 Kings viii. 10.
[7] St. Mark ix. 7.
[8] Acts i. 9.
[9] St. Matt. xxiv. 30.
[10] 1 Thess. iv. 17.
[11] Rev. xix. 6.
[12] Rev. xxii. 1.
[13] Rev. xxi. 1.

and kindreds, and people, and tongues, whose voice, as the sound of many waters, is heard before the throne of God in heaven.

The firmament, the atmosphere, the blue vault of heaven, represents the mercy and love of God—all-embracing, all-pervading.

> "The glorious sky, embracing all,
> Is like the Maker's love,
> Wherewith encompassed, great and small
> In peace and order move."

The Cross is the symbol of the breadth, length, depth, and height of God's love. The arms of the Cross remind us that "as far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us." The upright beam of the Cross is a call to "look how high the heaven is in comparison of the earth," and to learn that "so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him."[1]

"Toward them that fear Him." If we turn our thoughts again to the great events of this day, and in spirit stand beneath that symbol of the love of Christ that lifts itself on Calvary towards heaven, we have a great example of this mercy of God upon "them that fear Him."

There were, we know, two others who were crucified with our Blessed Lord—"one on the right hand, and the other on the left."[2]

At first both these criminals mocked at Jesus Christ,

[1] Ps. ciii. 12. [2] St. Luke xxiii. 33.

but the intercession of the great High Priest was not to be without even its immediate fruits. The light shined upon the darkened soul of one of those crucified with Him; he ceased to mock, and then turned to his fellow malefactor and rebuked him, saying, "Dost not thou fear God, seeing that thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this Man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom."[1]

Now the two criminals represent all the fallen world, divided as it is into the penitent and the impenitent. The robber who acknowledged our Lord, and the robber who died with mockery on his lips, had each the same crucified Lord beside him, and the same intercession was offered for both. The one, however, is enlightened, and draws nearer by faith to God; the other remains where he was. To the one our Lord does not speak at all; to the other He gives a promise of strange significance: "Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise."[2]

He has given to all the gift of free will: this gift He cannot withdraw. Of some He had said, "Ye will not come to Me";[3] but, "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out."[4]

All who should ever come to Him are represented in this dark hour of His Passion by the group around

[1] St. Luke xxiii. 40–42.
[2] St. Luke xxiii. 43.
[3] St. John v. 40.
[4] St. John vi. 37.

the Cross—the stainless Mother, the beloved disciple, the penitent Magdalen, and the repentant robber. The attractive power of Jesus crucified, of Jesus "lifted up,"[1] begins to make itself felt. The Cross is becoming the *scala cœli*—the means by which the penitent mount up towards God.

Already the act of heroic faith has enlightened the dying sight of the penitent thief, and the Precious Blood has baptised him and transferred him from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of God's dear Son. And now the voice of Him Who is "the Amen," "the faithful and true Witness," promises, not merely that he shall pass at once to the society of the holy dead, but that he shall find that realm of comparative darkness flooded with new light and transfigured. "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise."

Let us consider a little more fully what we are to understand by this word Paradise.

In that part of Hades which the Jews called Abraham's bosom, the souls of the righteous dead awaited the coming of the Redeemer.

From the time of the Fall the gates of Paradise—heaven—had been closed. The souls of the righteous could not enter heaven—the home of God—until its gates had been opened by Jesus Christ.

Abraham's bosom was therefore not the state in which the faithful departed enjoyed the Vision of God, but a place of waiting—neither heaven nor hell.

[1] St. John xii 32.

The essential of heaven is the Presence of God, and this Presence was not revealed in this intermediate state. Heaven, or Paradise, was to be reopened by the Incarnate Son of God. Hence our Lord always spoke of the place whence He came and whither He would eventually go as "heaven," never as Abraham's bosom. In speaking of the state of the departed before His Passion, our Lord used the language familiar to His hearers, but He never called that state Paradise or heaven; because, although the Jews occasionally called Abraham's bosom by the name of Paradise, it was not properly so called, since the Vision of God was essential to any true idea of Paradise.

Our Lord's human spirit passed from the Cross to the Limbus of the Fathers—Abraham's bosom—and yet, in speaking of this state to the repentant thief, He calls it Paradise—a name He has never applied to it before. Why was this? Surely because His Presence was the one thing required to turn the state of the holy dead into Paradise? our Lord did not enter heaven, properly so-called, until His Ascension, but, having overcome death on the Cross, His spirit passing into the Limbus of the Fathers, makes it to be Paradise—the place where God manifests Himself. At His Ascension our Lord emptied this place of waiting, and Himself led the holy souls into heaven. Cornelius A Lapide gives the reason for our Lord's choice of the name of Paradise for the Limbus of the Fathers in these words, "Ubi Christus ibi Paradisus."

In the creation "God called the firmament Heaven"; in the redemption He both made and called the intermediate state Paradise. Only temporarily was that Limbus a Paradise; only, that is, while our Lord was present in it. Afterwards it ceased to exist, but Paradise remained "where Christ is," *i.e.* in heaven properly so called.

After the Ascension only that part of Hades remained in which the souls of the imperfect are made perfect—the state, that is, of purification, of purgation, which is neither the hell of the lost, nor the Paradise of God.

The entry of the Soul of Jesus Christ into Limbus was therefore the cause of its becoming (while His Soul remained there) Paradise.

God in creation called the firmament heaven; in restoration He called the intermediate state Paradise. What a wonderful breaking in of light, joy, peace, and glory there must have been when our Lord entered the place of waiting, and manifested Himself and His victory over death! "O ye spirits and souls of the righteous, bless ye the Lord; praise Him, and magnify Him for ever."

And ever since the Ascension the gates of heaven have stood open: "When Thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death, Thou didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers." As soon as ever the stains of sin have been cleansed in the Church Expectant the soul is drawn irresistibly upward by the attractive power of the Vision of God. They above the firma-

ment become the cloud of Saints that are around the throne of God; they are glorified by the bright radiance that falls upon them from the Sun of Righteousness; they are laden with the dew of God's blessing in order that they may still nourish and foster the Church on earth. Their ministry is not ended; it is only taken up into a higher sphere that it may the better glorify God. Hence we believe in the Communion of Saints, the interchange that is always going on between the waters above and the waters below, between the peoples and multitudes and nations of the one Church of Jesus Christ—Militant, Expectant, Triumphant.

The great cloud of witnesses in the Church Triumphant, the Church on earth invokes—"O ye waters that be above the firmament, bless ye the Lord; praise Him, and magnify Him for ever." "Praise Him, all ye heavens, and ye waters that are above the heavens."

May it be ours when we die to pass quickly into the Presence of our Lord, to abide there for ever. Very beautiful are the old prayers of the Latin Church for her dying children: "We commend to Thee, O Lord, the soul of Thy servant. . . . Let the heavens be opened to him, and angels rejoice with him. Let the archangel St. Michael, whom Thou hast appointed the chief of the heavenly host, conduct him. Let the holy angels come out to meet him, and carry him to the city of the heavenly Jerusalem." Or again, addressing the soul itself, "May Jesus Christ, the Son

of the living God, place thee in the ever-verdant pastures of His Paradise."

Before Christ died, and rose again, and ascended, none could enter heaven; all, even the holiest, must be shut out and await in an intermediate state the "Christus Liberator." Since Christ died, the heavenly Paradise is open evermore, and as soon as may be each soul that departs hence in the Lord may enter into the joy of its Lord.

The time of the soul's purification may be long or it may be short, but when it is over there is no further delay.[1] Let us, by our prayers for the faithful departed, hasten the time when the holy Souls being cleansed shall enter into their reward. "Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord; and light perpetual shine upon them." "May the souls of the faithful, through the mercy of God, rest in peace." Let us often and often repeat for these expectant ones the great psalm of the departed—*De profundis.*

"When the last dread hour approaching
Fills my guilty soul with fear;
All my sins rise up before me,
All my virtues disappear.
Jesus! Jesus!
Let the dying thief's free pardon
Echo in my dying ear."

[1] The state of the dead, before and after the Passion, is more fully discussed in my book, *The Soul Here and Hereafter.*

XXIX.

HOLY WEEK

The Seven Words of Creation and Restoration

THE THIRD WORD

Prophecy

"God spake once, and twice I have also heard the same: that power belongeth unto God; and that Thou, Lord, art merciful."

Creation

"Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear. . . . Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself upon the earth."

Restoration

"Woman, behold thy son! . . . Behold thy mother!"

XXIX.

"The Earth standing out of the Waters"

I.

AND God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so. And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called He Seas: and God saw that it was good. And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good. And the evening and the morning were the third day."[1]

The work of creation on this third day advances another step in bringing order out of chaos.

On the first day there was the creation of the light and its separation from the darkness; on the second day, the separation of the waters by the firmament; on this third day the voice of God is heard commanding the waters to gather together to one place, and the dry land

[1] Gen. i. 9–13.

to appear. The great seas and the firm earth assume their bounds. The mountains and dry land rise from the deep, and the waters that couch beneath retire within the girdle of their shores. "At the Almighty word, the slopes of the hills and the sweeping valleys are clothed with tender grass, strewn with flowers, and roughened with waving forests. The lifting up of the mountains had created rivers; the calling forth of verdure and shadowing trees"[1] completed the work of this third day of creation, "and God saw that it was good."

The Psalmist reminds us what a rich casket the earth is in the words, "The earth is the Lord's, and all that *therein* is." The silver and the gold, and all the precious metals; the precious stones and marbles that are hidden away for man's use in this treasury, are the creation and gift of God Himself.

All this hidden wealth is outwardly symbolised by the loveliness with which the surface of the earth is clothed; the grass, the flowers, and the trees are the visible sign of the inward riches that are stored up in such inexhaustible abundance in the earth.

But, until the command came for the waters to gather themselves together, so that the dry land might appear, the earth was hidden beneath a vast, rolling mass of waters. It was only when the earth had been called out from beneath this boundless waste of waters that it became possible for it to be adorned with the beauty

[1] *Hours with the Bible*, vol. i. p. 63.

of flowers and foliage, of grass, and of trees. The earth rises up out of the seas and floods towards heaven, and is watered by the rain and the dew from those clouds or waters that be above the firmament. The word "seas" means "tumults" and "agitation," a fitting figure, as we have seen, of the natural state of man—of the world that lieth in wickedness.

Just as on the second day some of the waters are drawn up above the firmament and glorified, so on the third day out of the waters arises that more firm and sure order of creation—"the round world." "He hath made the round world so sure, that it cannot be moved,"[1] in contradistinction to the tossings of the sea that cannot rest, but is carried to and fro by every wind.

II.

The calling forth of the earth from the midst of the waters may well then be a type of the Eternal Word calling "out of the world" the new creation of His Church.[2] Our Lord Himself, in one of His parables, taught the firmness and security of His Church, founded upon a rock against which the winds beat in vain.

But the earth itself, created by God and stored with many precious gifts, is a type of humanity. God formed the first man out of "the dust of the ground," and breathed into him the breath of life. Man has

[1] Ps. xciii. 2.

[2] The Greek word for Church signifies "to call out," ἐκκλησία from ἐκ-καλέω.

therefore a kinship with "mother earth." Originally the earth was pronounced to be "very good"—a garden of delights, adorned with grass and herbs and fruits; but after the fall of man it was tainted by the curse, and brought forth "thorns and thistles."

So also man himself, adorned at his creation with many natural and supernatural gifts and graces, was declared to be "very good." It was only as a consequence of sin that he became subject to sickness, pain, and death.

Out of the unfallen earth, then, God formed Adam; and when the time came for the restoration, "God sent forth His Son, made of a woman."[1] God chose that His Word should come in contact with humanity (and so with the earth out of which the human race had originally been formed) by His birth from Blessed Mary.

The first Adam was formed out of the dust of the unfallen world; the Body of the Second Adam in its formation was separated from the curse that fell upon the old world, in that it was conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born of Mary, a pure Virgin. Our Lord came, not for His own sake, but "for us men, and for our salvation." He came to free us also from the curse, and to fashion a mystical Body by the operation of the Holy Ghost. For this purpose He spake the word that called forth His Church from the midst of the human race; He made its foundations so sure that it should

[1] Gal. iv. 4.

not be moved at any time, and filled it with good gifts, and adorned it with grace and truth.

In the fall of man, the original righteousness with which he had been gifted was lost, and his intellect became darkened. In the restoration Jesus Christ willed to restore this righteousness by divinely-ordained means of grace, and to dispel the darkness of the intellect by the light of faith. Our Lord therefore instituted "holy mysteries," or Sacraments, to be the channels of that grace of which the fulness was in His own Person. He instituted His Church to be the Teacher which should represent Him in the world. "He that heareth you," He said to the Apostles, "heareth Me."[1] The Church was to be His own Presence, continued on earth to the end of time: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."[2] For this reason the Church is called "His Body." His natural Body had been conceived by the Holy Ghost, and was born of the Virgin Mary. Mary was therefore the channel by which Jesus Christ—the Source of all grace—came into the world.

Mary may well therefore represent those "extensions of the Incarnation," which are channels of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ—the holy Sacraments. She herself had been declared by the Angel sent from God to be "full of grace," even before she gave birth to Him by Whom came grace and truth. Mary is therefore the

[1] St. Luke x. 16. [2] St. Matt. xxviii. 20.

channel of the Incarnation, and thus becomes the type of the channels of grace.

From the Sacrament of regeneration springs the Church of God, "the pillar and ground of the truth."[1] But this "truth" was especially committed to the Apostles as the hierarchy of the Church. To them our Lord committed the teaching office. "He that heareth you, heareth Me." We have then, in Mary, a type of the channels of grace—the sacramental system; in the Apostolic hierarchy we find a type of dogmatic truth.

With "grace and truth" our Lord has adorned His Church, even as at creation the fresh grass, the flowers, and the trees clothed the surface of the earth with beauty.

III.

"Now there stood by the Cross of Jesus His Mother . . . When Jesus therefore saw His Mother, and the disciple standing by, whom He loved, He saith unto His Mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith He to the disciple, Behold thy Mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home."[2]

Our Lord, amid all the suffering of the Cross, is mindful of others. His first word is a prayer for those who have been guilty of a monstrous perversion of justice in condemning Him, and for His executioners. But behind this first word is hidden the mystery of

[1] 1 Tim. iii. 15. [2] St. John xix. 25–27.

the pardon of the Precious Blood invoked upon all the "ignorances" of the world, and embodied in the Sacrament of regeneration, whereby original sin is put away and the knowledge of God given to us in the light of faith.

In the second word we also have our Lord's tender love for souls—shown this time in the immediate pardon of one who had so lately been among those who reviled Him.

In this third word our Lord speaks to His Mother, and the beloved disciple, who stand apart from the multitude, close to His Cross.

Mary and John have been called apart into special nearness to Him—special separation from the world. At the beginning of His ministry our Lord said to His Mother, "Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come." But now the "hour" has come when our Lord can fitly acknowledge His Mother. The nature He has taken from her shows itself in weakness, not in power, hanging on the Cross. None can doubt the reality of that Humanity. Even so His human love cannot allow Him to part from that Mother He has loved so well, and who has been so devoted to her Son, without making some provision for her needs. Who so fit to treasure the Blessed Mother, and make a home for her, as the beloved disciple? "When Jesus therefore saw His Mother, and the disciple standing by, whom He loved, He saith unto His Mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then

saith He to the disciple, behold thy Mother!" But there are mysteries in each of these Seven Words. If on the Cross it is plainly seen that Jesus Christ is truly Man, yet none the less the ear of faith catches in His words the echo of an Almighty voice, full of the power of God.

The Holy Family is, in one sense, now broken up. St. Joseph is dead, Jesus is dying, Mary will be left alone. But no; our Lord, in making provision for her needs, in committing His Mother to His disciple, has mystically figured the formation of another home. In place of His natural Body, He gives to Mary a special care of His mystical Body—the Church; and in turn He commends His Mother to His Church as His last legacy of love.

St. John is an Apostle, and as such the representative on Calvary of the hierarchy of the Church, to whom had been committed the truth that was to be made known to all nations.

Mary, the second Eve—the channel of life as Eve was the channel of death—Mary,[1] "full of grace," stands beneath the meritorious Cross of her Son as the type of the sacramental Mysteries, the reservoirs of the Precious Blood. Between the Mother and the disciple there is the Cross raised on high, and on it lifted up

[1] The Vulgate (Gen. i. 10) reads: "congregationesque aquarum appellavit *Maria*." In St. Luke (i. 27) we read: "Et nomen Virginis *Maria*." This verbal identity of the Latin for "seas" and "Mary" led the quaint fancy of mediæval writers to take the "seas" as typical of "Mary, full of grace."

the great High Priest, the Head of His Body—the Church. He is also the Divine Victim, the Sacrifice, that taketh away the sin of the world.

From Jesus crucified there must flow, through the ordained channels, both grace and truth to the souls of men.

> "He shall come down like showers
> Upon the fruitful earth;
> And joy and hope, like flowers,
> Spring in His path to birth:
> Before Him on the mountains
> Shall peace, the herald, go:
> From hill to vale the fountains
> Of righteousness o'erflow."

Jesus Himself is the Church,[1] and He has chosen to be represented on earth by His apostolic hierarchy. This hierarchy, represented by St. John on Calvary, shall be related to the mysteries of His grace, as a son to a mother—as, in the natural order, He Himself is related to His Mother. To Mary He says, "Woman, behold thy son!" to the disciple, "Behold thy Mother!"

All the fair fruits and flowers that have sprung up in the garden of the Lord—the Holy Church—owe their existence, as well as their fragrance and their beauty, to the truth of God and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We ourselves have been born again, strengthened, nourished, and healed through the sacramental channels of grace in the Holy Church. "Behold thy Mother!"

[1] Eph. i. 22, 23.

We ourselves have been taught by the apostolic hierarchy, speaking in the Master's Name, the faith once delivered to the Saints; we have had the truth revealed to us. By it "we have been brought out of darkness and error into the clear light and knowledge" of God our Father and of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Church—the mystical Christ—arising out of the human race is therefore the Anti-type of the first creation: "And God said, Let the waters under heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so." As Adam represented the old world and in him grace and truth were lost, so Jesus Christ represents the new creation in which grace and truth are restored. With these He has beautified the "new earth," and glorified "the new heavens."

"And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good. And the evening and the morning were the third day."

XXX.

HOLY WEEK

The Seven Words of Creation and Restoration

THE FOURTH WORD

Prophecy

"God spake once, and twice I have also heard the same: that power belongeth unto God; and that Thou, Lord, art merciful."

Creation

"Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth."

Restoration

"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

XXX.

The Creation of Sun, Moon, and Stars

I.

"AND God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: He made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good. And the evening and the morning were the fourth day."[1]

In the former days of creation we have seen the gradual development of the world in order and beauty. First, the light breaking in upon the darkness of chaos—light, the very symbol of the Divine Nature.

Then the separation of the waters by the firmament, followed by the gathering of the waters together into

[1] Gen. i. 14–19.

seas, and the appearance of the earth, covered with all the loveliness of the green grass, the trees, and the flowers.

On the fourth day God calls into existence the sun, the moon, and the stars, and places them in the firmament. The sun is the great source of light to the earth; the atmosphere assists in the equal diffusion of the light, while in turn the sun purifies the atmosphere. Light, so needful for the health of the animal and vegetable world, is, in fact, a great storehouse of life, a great power of God. Well may the sun be said to "rule the day," for upon it depends the well-being of man and everything that has life. By it the plants and trees are made serviceable in the purification of the atmosphere, and by it man is cheered and invigorated. Without light all animate nature would sicken and die, for all that lives depends for its life either directly or indirectly upon the light. The sun is the great central power of the solar system, and round it the earth and all the planets revolve in their orbits.

But while all the planets share in the light and heat given by the sun, the moon belongs only to the earth; and both earth and moon borrow their light from the sun. "There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon,"[1] but each in its own degree is glorious, and declares the glory of God. The moon, 'floating in the clear sky, or poised among the fleecy, tinted clouds, silvering the water or piercing through

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 41.

the trees—in every phase or aspect it is beautiful. Like an enchanter it casts the charm of picturesqueness over the meanest object, and masses which look hard or ugly in the garish light of the sun mellow into beauty when touched by the power of the moonbeam."[1] "There is," writes St. Paul, "another glory of the stars," and this glory is, indeed, most wonderful. Even at the present day, with all the appliances of astronomy, the "glory of the stars" is only beginning to be understood. The Psalmist says, "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the hosts of them by the breath of His mouth";[2] and again, "I will consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained."[3]

The stars are innumerable, scattered through countless millions of miles of space, and yet all fulfilling their courses in perfect order. Myriads of stars are beyond the furthest reach of human sight, but great multitudes of these hosts of light are visible to us, and shine down upon the earth from the firmament. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork."[4] When the sunlight is withdrawn, and the moon does not give her light, the stars are with us. They guide the traveller, and before the loadstone was known it was by the stars that the pilot steered his course.

It has been truly said, "He who by thoughtful

[1] G. C. CHILD, M.D., *Benedicte.*
[2] Ps. xxxiii. 6.
[3] Ps. viii. 3.
[4] Ps. xix. 1.

contemplation has familiarised his mind with the wonders of the heavens, will feel his whole spirit imbued with the glory of the great Architect, by Whose Almighty Word they were called into existence. To him, sun, moon, and stars, silent though they be, will speak a language which he will ever deeply feel even though he may not always comprehend. Nor will they fail, when solemnly invoked in the service of the Church, to stir up responsive adoration in his heart, for they symbolise to him more than any other visible objects the Wisdom and Power of the Creator."[1]

"O ye Sun and Moon, bless ye the Lord: praise Him, and magnify Him for ever. O ye Stars of Heaven, bless ye the Lord: praise Him, and magnify Him for ever."

"Whoso is wise will ponder these things; and they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord."

II.

The symbolism of this fourth day of creation is so self-evident that little need here be said about it. In the sun, moon, and stars, we have the concentration of some of the uncreated brightness of God in created sources of light. St. John declares that "God is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all." In the "Litany of the Holy Name" our Lord is invoked as the "Splendour of the Father," the "Brightness of Eternal Light," the

[1] *Benedicite.*

"Sun of Righteousness," and the "True Light."[1] These titles do but suggest different aspects of His Person and work. St. Paul has said all there is to say of this magnificence of light in Jesus Christ when, writing to the Corinthians, he reminds them that "God, Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."[2] "God," says the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "hath . . . spoken to us by His Son . . . Who" is "the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His Person." It is to the Church especially that Jesus Christ is the true Light. The members of His Church are chosen to "show forth the praises of Him Who hath called" them "out of darkness into His marvellous light."[3]

Some of the ways in which our Lord is the antitype of the sun have already been dwelt upon.[4] He is the great Light of "the day of grace"; His rays purify the whole atmosphere of His Church, while in turn the Church distributes His brightness to the reason and conscience of mankind. If the Church is enabled to bear much fruit, it is by the warmth and life-giving rays of the Sun of Righteousness that the work of the Holy Spirit is matured. When Jesus Christ is present all is

[1] "Splendor Patris,
Candor lucis æternæ,
Sol justitiæ,
Lux vera."

[2] 1 Cor. iv. 6. [3] 1 Peter ii. 9.

[4] *Jesus, the Sun of our Life*, p. 205.

well; when He is hidden by earth's mists all life must tend to sicken and decay. Around our Lord—the great central Light of the Church's system—all revolves. But although He is, in a very special way, the Light of His Church, He is, we believe, also the Light of all creation. He is the Light "which lighteth every man that cometh into the world," whether the man is conscious of His influence or not. The sun, therefore, is essentially "to rule the day"—whether in the natural order or in the spiritual. The day of grace will be followed by the eternal day.

The lesser light God made "to rule the night." We know that in Holy Scripture different aspects of truth are presented to us. From one point of view the life of man, living under the influence of Jesus Christ, is compared to the day. But, compared with the eternal life, all the light we have now is as darkness. "Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face."[1] There is, therefore, an aspect of Christian life that is fitly compared with the night—not, however, the night in which there is no light, but where the light is as the light of the moon and the stars. "The night," says St. Paul, "is far spent, the day is at hand."[2] The Church is especially the light of this earth, but her light is that of the moon rather than of the sun in its strength. All her light is indeed borrowed from her Lord, and she reflects His brightness in a way suited to temporal things. St. Augustine says, "The Church

[1] 1 Cor. xiii. 12. [2] Rom. xiii. 12.

waxes and wanes like the moon: from a very small beginning she has been developed, and anon she seems to fade as she approaches the time when she shall be united to her Divine Spouse." The seed of David "shall stand fast for evermore as the moon, and as the faithful witness in heaven,"[1] for in the new heavens and the new earth "the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun";[2] and the Church, participating in the glory of Jesus Christ, shall be clothed with the sun.

It is not without a beautiful significance that the observance of the Easter Festival is regulated by the moon.[3]

As the moon represents the Church, so the stars are the multitude of the faithful. They shine as lights in a dark world.

"Stars are of mighty use. The night
Is dark and long;
The Rode foul; and where one goes right,
Six may go wrong.
One twinkling ray
Shot o'er some cloud,
May clear much way,
And guide a croud.

"God's Saints are shining lights: who stays
Here long must passe
O'er dark hills, swift streames, and steep ways
As smooth as glasse;
But these all night,
Like Candles, shed
Their beams, and light
Us into Bed.

[1] Ps. lxxxix. 36. [2] Isa. xxx. 26.

[3] Easter Day is always the Sunday following the first full moon on or after March 21st—the vernal equinox.

"They are indeed our Pillar-fires,
Seen as we go;
They are that Citie's shining spires
We travell to.
A sword-like gleame
Kept man from sin.
First *Out:* this beame
Will guide him *In*."[1]

Though they are the "great multitude, which no man could number,"[2] yet they are all known to God, for "He telleth the number of the stars, and calleth them all by their names."[3] But all the stars are not of equal brilliancy, for "one star differeth from another star in glory";[4] even so among the faithful the saints in the spiritual heavens do especially declare the glory of God, Who is "wonderful in His saints."[5]

The mystical teaching of Holy Scripture on the stars is very full of significance and beauty. The seven stars of the Apocalypse represent the Seven Angels or Pontiffs of the Churches; "they who turn many to righteousness" are told that they shall shine "as the stars for ever and ever";[6] while the wicked are described as "wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever."[7] "The stars shall fall from heaven,"[8] and even the bright shining of Lucifer, the son of the morning, the light-bearer, has been so eclipsed by his "fall from heaven,"[9] that he is now the

[1] HENRY VAUGHAN, 1678.
[2] Rev. vii. 9.
[3] Ps. cxlvii. 4.
[4] 1 Cor. xv. 41.
[5] Ps. lxviii. 35.
[6] Dan. xii. 3.
[7] Jude 13.
[8] Isa. xxiv. 29.
[9] St. Luke x. 18.

prince of darkness. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

On the other hand, our Divine Lord, although He is the Sun of Righteousness, has also chosen to call Himself "the bright and morning Star."

"The moon above, the Church below,
A wondrous race they run;
But all their radiance, all their glow,
Each borrows of its Sun.

The Saviour lends the light and heat
That crown His holy hill;
The Saints, like stars, around His seat,
Perform their courses still."[1]

III.

All the spiritual brightness of the Church on earth and in heaven was merited by the Passion of our Lord. The Cross is the great lighthouse of the Church; but in coming to the fourth word from the Cross we are told that it was uttered in the darkness that fell upon Calvary about the sixth hour on that first Good Friday. "It was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened."[2] Our Lord had said just before the Passion, "This is your hour, and the power of darkness."[3]

"And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud

[1] *Christian Year.* [2] St. Luke xxiii. 44-45.
[3] St. Luke xxii. 53.

voice, saying . . . My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"[1] The veiling of the sun seems to have accompanied some strange, mysterious darkness in the human Soul of our Lord; the all-holy Sanctuary of the Sacred Heart is darkened at the same moment as the veil of the earthly sanctuary is rent, and the light breaks in upon the old worship of the Jewish Church, henceforth abolished. "The sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst."[2]

What that awful cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" meant, we cannot say. Some realisation of the evil that drives away the light from the soul may have been allowed to fall upon the One Who was bearing the curse of all the sins of the sin-stained world. All we can know is that the darkness for us has been dispersed by His endurance of the Cross; His desolation has made it possible for us, in our life, and in our death, to see God.

"I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto Me, for I have redeemed thee."[3]

From this Passion of our Lord comes the grace by which we who "were sometime darkness" are made "light in the Lord."[4]

Because He seemed to be forsaken of the Father, we have the promise, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."[5] Hence we can say, "Yea, though I walk

[1] St. Matt. xxvii. 46. [2] St. Luke xxiii. 45. [3] Isa. xliv. 22.
[4] Eph. v. 8. [5] Heb. xiii. 5.

through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me."[1]

> "Hold Thou Thy Cross before my closing eyes;
> Shine through the gloom, and point me to the skies;
> Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee;
> In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me."

Let our prayer be, "Cast not me away from Thy presence; forsake me not when my strength faileth me."

[1] Ps. xxiii. 4.

XXXI.

HOLY WEEK

The Seven Words of Creation and Restoration

THE FIFTH WORD

Prophecy

"God spake once, and twice I have also heard the same; that power belongeth unto God; and that Thou, Lord, art merciful."

Creation

"Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven. . . . Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth."

Restoration

"I thirst."

XXXI.

The Waters of Life

I.

"AND God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven. And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth. And the evening and the morning were the fifth day."[1]

The heavens, lighted with sun and moon, and encrusted with a multitude of stars, are now finished, and their light is given to the earth to foster life. But, so far, there is only vegetable life.

On the fifth day God spake, and at His word a new and higher form of life has its birth; the waters brought forth fish in abundance; the birds fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.

[1] Gen. i. 20–23.

We notice it is "the waters brought forth," not that the fish were created and placed in the waters, or the fowl created and given the firmament in which to fly.

The idea of life is thus connected with the waters. In Holy Scripture the water is often associated with the thought of life. The Psalmist says, "With Thee is the fountain of life."[1] We read in the book of the Prophet Jeremiah that God rebuked His people for two sins, one of which was, "They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water";[2] while one of the prophecies of grace in the kingdom of Christ is given in the words, "It shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem," recalling the opening words of the last chapter of the Apocalypse, "And he showed me a river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb."[3] Our Lord spoke to Nicodemus of being "born of water and of the Spirit";[4] and to the woman of Samaria of "living water." In these, and in many other passages of Holy Scripture, water is spoken of as life-giving. It is perhaps with some such reference that St. John wrote in his Apocalypse, "The waters that thou sawest . . . are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues."[5]

It is worthy of recollection that science discovers the first germs of life in water.[6] In this fact we have but one of the many apparently accidental anticipations of

[1] Ps. xxxvi. 9. [2] Jer. ii. 13. [3] Rev. xxii. 1.
[4] St. John iii. 5. [5] Rev. xvii. 15. [6] Protozoa.

the discoveries of science in Holy Scripture, which strengthen our belief in its inspiration. The birds are among the witnesses to the power and goodness of God. Their graceful flight and their sweet song add greatly to our enjoyment of the natural beauty of the earth. Who has not felt the charm of the fragrant silence of the summer night, broken but not disturbed by the clear note of the nightingale? Who has not watched the skylark hymning its way towards heaven, and understood better the meaning of the words of the hymn, "O all ye Fowls of the air, bless ye the Lord; praise Him, and magnify Him for ever"?

II.

In turning to the mystical sense of the work of this fourth day of creation, we are necessarily reminded of our Lord's words, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."[1] If the natural waters are associated with life, still more are the spiritual waters; they bring forth abundantly. Our Lord, in His Baptism in the river Jordan, sanctified "water to the mystical washing away of sin"; and ever since the going forth of the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life, to move upon the waters, the Church on earth has been peopled by those who have been born of water and of the Spirit.

The rivers of the baptismal flood "make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the

[1] St. John iii. 5.

Most Highest."[1] The Psalmist adds, "God is in the midst of her; therefore shall she not be removed"; for these are not the troubled waters of the restless sea, but rather the smooth depths of the sea "like unto glass," that stretches itself out before the throne of God. Or again, to borrow the magnificent imagery of the Apocalypse, this flood is as that heavenly "sea of glass mingled with fire"; the flaming fires of the Paraclete as He manifested Himself at Pentecost, and the waters of regeneration, to cleanse and vivify with divine faith and love those who are "born of water and of the Spirit." "I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints. Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? for Thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before Thee; for Thy judgments are made manifest."[2]

"The song of Moses" was that great hymn of praise that he sang when Israel had safely passed through the waters, and gone out of Egypt—figuring thereby the waters of Holy Baptism. But "the song of the Lamb" —what is that but the song which, in His mystical

[1] Ps. xlvi. 4. [2] Rev. xv. 2–4.

Body, the great Leader of the people of God offers with His elect in the Easter triumph after the passage through the Red Sea of His own most Precious Blood? From the countless altars of His Church that song of victory will go up when Easter morning dawns again. "It is very meet, right, and our bounden duty, that we should at all times, and in all places, give thanks unto Thee, O Lord, Holy Father, Almighty, Everlasting God. But chiefly are we bound to praise Thee for the glorious Resurrection of Thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord . . . . Who by His death hath destroyed death, and by His rising to life again hath restored to us everlasting life. Therefore with Angels and Archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify Thy glorious name; evermore praising Thee, and saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth are full of Thy glory: Glory be to Thee, O Lord most High."

And has not, by immemorial tradition, the Easter Festival been ushered in by the solemn administration of Holy Baptism?[1] It is by the sharing mystically in His death, by being "buried with Him in baptism,"[2] that we pass to our joyful participation in His glorious Resurrection.

It was with some such thoughts as these that the early Christian Church in the catacombs symbolically represented Jesus Christ by the word ἰχθύς—Fish.

[1] See "Liturgical Notes for Easter."

[2] Col. ii. 12.

Each letter of this mystical title had its own meaning—

I, Ἰησοῦς—Jesus.
χ, Χριστὸς—Christ.
θ, Θεοῦ—of God.
υ, Υἱὸς—the Son.
ς, Σωτὴρ—the Saviour.[1]

"And Jesus, when He was baptised, went up straightway out of the water: and lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him: and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased."[2]

On this day, not only did the waters bring forth abundantly, but the birds winged their way through the firmament. If we ask what this may figure in the spiritual order, there are many suggestions in God's Word. The most blessed Spirit of God, at the Baptism of our Lord, descended in the form of a Dove, and "moved on the face of the waters," ere It was quite lost to sight in the heavens. Was this not a twofold type, first of the sanctification of water to the mystical washing away of sin, and then of the soul thus made a "beloved Son" of God, led through life by the Spirit onward and upward to the Paradise of God? From the Font the soul arises transformed and wings its

[1] Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour.
[2] St. Matt. iii. 16, 17.

way up towards heaven, to praise God throughout eternity.

"Happy birds that sing and fly
Round Thine altars, O most High."

"Yea, the sparrow hath found her an house, and the swallow a nest where she may lay her young; even Thy altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God."[1]

III.

"After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst."[2]

The physical thirst of our Lord in His Passion we need not dwell upon. We know it must have been a great suffering. The loss of blood, the scorching heat of the Eastern sun that beat down so fiercely upon Calvary before the darkness veiled its light; all this must have made the thirst of our Lord a real agony.

But there is a deeper meaning in His words. Once, in His ministry, "Jesus, being wearied with His journey," rested by a well as He went through Samaria, and "it was about the sixth hour. There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give Me to drink."[3] We know how our Lord in these words meant more than appeared on the surface, and how He gently rebuked the woman: "If

[1] Ps. lxxxiv. 3. [2] St. John xix. 28. [3] St. John iv. 6, 7.

thou knewest the gift of God, and Who it is that saith to thee, Give Me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee *living water.*"

And now again, "wearied with His journey," and also "about the sixth hour," He Who spake these words is dying on the Cross; He is purchasing for all His children the water of life with His own Blood —but, as that Blood flows down, drop by drop, to assuage the thirst of the world, the loss of it causes that thirst which mystically it also satisfies. If it can now be said of the redeemed, "They shall hunger no more, nor thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat,"[1] it is because on Calvary the burning heat of the sun has forced from the lips of the dying Saviour the cry, "I thirst." And for what does He thirst, but for our salvation and the fulfilment of the holy will of God? The former word spoken in the darkness was, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" and now it is as if He said, "My soul is athirst for . . . the living God,"[2]—for that glory of the Father which He sought so earnestly, and which can only be given to Him by the "bringing many sons unto glory."[3] We know how, in the "one Baptism for the remission of sins," our Lord has purchased with His own Blood the living waters of the Font. His goodness allows Him to find no alleviation for the thirst of His Passion except through our

[1] Rev. vii. 16. [2] Ps. xlii. 2. [3] Heb. ii. 10.

salvation. "Blessed," He had said in the Sermon on the Mount, "are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."[1] In satisfying the thirst of the soul for God, He satisfies His own thirst also.

Do we ask, "Lord, when saw we Thee athirst?" If so, we can to-day find the answer by listening to the voice from the Cross, "I thirst."

What will He say in the judgment to each one of us? Will it be, "I was thirsty, and ye gave Me no drink"? or "I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink"?

We have the power to satisfy this thirst, not only in ministering to our Lord in the person of His poor, but by offering to Him our own self. He thirsts for our eternal welfare. To-day let us, who have been regenerated in the waters of life, see that we satisfy this thirst by ourselves thirsting after righteousness. The less we thirst after Him, the more He suffers; by thirsting for Him we give Him to drink. But after all, it is our own good that He desires, thirsts for; it is our own thirst He would allay. We must thirst—whether we will or no; but He would fain satisfy us: "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely,"[2] is His own gracious promise. If we reject His love, there may come a time when it will be too late to turn to Him. We remember the words in the gospel story of one who delayed until the opportunity had passed away; how "in hell

[1] St. Matt. v. 6. [2] Rev. xxi. 6.

he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue: for I am tormented in this flame."[1]

Let us then to-day, in listening to the cry, "I thirst," draw near and ask of Him Who thirsts to fulfil His promise to give us of the water of life freely, so that we "shall never thirst." "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."[2] "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."[3]

"I heard the voice of Jesus say,
'Behold I freely give
The living water; thirsty one,
Stoop down, and drink, and live.'
I came to Jesus, and I drank
Of that life-giving stream;
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
And now I live in Him."

[1] St. Luke xvi. 23, 24. [2] St. John iv. 14. [3] Rev. xxii. 17.

XXXII.

HOLY WEEK

The Seven Words of Creation and Restoration

THE SIXTH WORD

Prophecy

"God spake once, and twice I have also heard the same; that power belongeth unto God; and that Thou, Lord, art merciful."

Creation

"Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind. . . . Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth."

Restoration

"It is finished."

XXXII.

The First Good Friday

I.

"GOD said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so. And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good. And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them. And God blessed them, and God spake to them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree,

in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so. And God saw every thing that He had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them."[1]

The close of the fifth day witnessed the creation of the lower forms of animate life—the fish and the fowl. We are told that these were brought forth by the waters. God now, on the sixth day—Friday—turns to the earth and commands it to bring forth beasts and cattle. But this day is not to close until creation has reached its highest point on earth, in the making of man. Here, for the first time, there is an indication of the Plurality of Persons in the Unity of the Divine Nature. "God said, Let *Us* make man in *Our* image, after *Our* likeness." We are then told that God created man in His own image, "In the image of God created He him."

"The waters," it is said, brought forth "after their kind," and "winged fowl after his kind." The earth also brought forth the beast "after his kind," and "cattle after their kind." But when man is made, although we learn later on that the Lord God formed him from the dust of the ground, there is nothing

[1] Gen. i. 24–31, ii. 1.

said of the earth bringing forth this creation after his kind. No, man comes from God in a unique way, after *His* kind, in His "image and likeness." How is this? Is it not because there is a twofold life in man—a life of the body shared with the rest of the animate creation; and a further gift of life imparted by the inbreathing from God of a share of His own Spirit? God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life." God, Who is Spirit, "inspired man." To the brute He gave an animal soul, to man the "breath of life," a spiritual soul. Man was therefore the earthly climax in the ascending scale of creation. He had points of contact with all Nature, animate and inanimate. Formed from the dust of the ground, man had kinship with his "mother earth." In common with the lower forms of creation, he was given a body and a sensitive, animal soul, while from the Creator he received a special gift, the "breath of life," which spiritualised the soul, and linked the nature of man with the nature of the angels and of God Himself: "God created man in His own image." God, as the Creator, is the supreme Lord over all, but He willed that man should, to some extent, represent His authority over the lower forms of creation. He therefore gave man "dominion . . . over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." Was not this intended as a type of the empire of the reason and the will over the lower animal nature? an indication that man should have his passions in subjection?

"And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were *finished*, and all the host of them."

This was the first Friday of the recorded creation; it was a day when God surveyed the work of all the other days, and declared the whole was "very good"; it was the day when all the work of creation was "finished"—it was the first Good Friday.

II.

It would be out of place here to enter, even superficially, into the speculations of science as to the origin of man. The consideration of this problem is one that has come very much to the front during the present generation.

Holy Scripture and the Church allow a wide liberty of interpretation of the words, "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground." Man's body is said to be "formed," not created; and the formation may possibly have been a very gradual one, tending towards perfection through many evolutions. But, either mediately or immediately, man, like the rest of creation, owes his existence to God; and whether we incline to the belief that man's body was an immediate creation of God, or to the theory that it was the result of evolution, the Bible and Church teach that the immaterial spirit was certainly a definite creation of God. God created man "in His own image and likeness."

The body before this inbreathing of the spiritual soul was not "man"; man is the composite of soul and body. It is in the soul that the image of God is to be sought, and it is the soul that is probably referred to in the words that speak of man as a separate creation. As regards the outward formation of man, it is true that "there is a manifest progress in the succession of beings on the surface of the earth. His progress consists in an increasing similarity of the living fauna; and, among the vertebrates especially, in their increasing resemblance to man."[1] But the gulf between the nearest approach to man in the brute creation, and man, as possessing a rational soul, is immense. We know nothing of the supernatural gifts or graces that God may have given to man before the Fall. All that is taught on this subject by theologians is necessarily of the nature of speculation, since revelation is silent. We learn, however, that, in the natural order, fatigue, pain, sickness, and death were not the lot of man from the beginning. They resulted from the loss of that integrity with which God endowed the first man.[2]

All the lesser forms of creation, animate and inanimate, were intended to lead up to, and prepare the way for, man; they were all given to man as his servants. Man was, therefore, the apex of all the work which God had made. As He surveyed His creation

[1] Agassiz, *Principles of Zoology*.
[2] See *The Mystery of Evil*, p. 230.

He could say, "It is consummated—it is completed—it is finished."

III.

Some four thousand years later in the world's history, on the sixth day of the week, the Incarnate God—agonising, blood-stained, wounded, and crowned with thorns—surveyed from the Cross the work of restoration and redemption, and declared it to be finished. "When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, He said, It is finished."[1]

The work of restoration was so far complete that the Second Adam had become "obedient unto death," in the undoing of the disobedience of the first Adam that culminated in death. "By man came death."[2]

The first Adam was overcome by death, and had his life taken from him against his will. With the Second Adam it was quite the reverse. He had in Himself the power of an endless life. He could say truly, "I lay down My life," and "no man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again."[3] Our Lord, in His Passion and Resurrection, exercised each of these powers in turn, and both were equally wonderful. To death, as well as to the unjust judge, He could say, "Thou couldest have no power at all against Me, except it were given thee from above."[4] It was the

[1] St. John xix. 30.
[2] 1 Cor. xv. 21.
[3] St. John x. 17, 18.
[4] St. John xix. 11.

voluntariness of His death that made it so great a sacrifice of love. "Having loved His own . . . He loved them unto the end,"[1] to the consummation, the climax beyond which love could not go—the surrender of His life.

"It is finished." All the work of God in the long ages since the Fall had led up to the work of this Good Friday. The types and shadows of the Jewish Church, its sacrifices and its ceremonial; all the visions of the prophets and the anticipations of heathendom are interpreted—finished.

"The desire of all nations" has come, and now, upon the sixth day of the week, it can again be said as at the creation, "God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good. . . . Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day."

But, as in creation the finished work endured in that which God had already made, so the finished work of Calvary still abides in the new creation—the Church of God. In the beginning God imparted something of His own life to man, created in the image and likeness of God. "He breathed into man the breath of life." This imparting to the creature of some of the life of the Creator was the crowning work of the creation, and a great manifestation of God's power.

In the restoration God did more than He did at the beginning. He made the Man, Christ Jesus, conceived

[1] St. John xiii. 1.

by the Holy Ghost, to be "the express Image of His Person."[1] God Himself was, by the Incarnation, in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. He gave Himself as Man, for man, wholly and entirely.

Nor was this all; God gave Himself in Christ, as Man, for man, in order that Christ, as Man, might offer a Deified human life for man to God. God and man met together in Christ and were reconciled. There was an atonement. Hence Jesus Christ is the link that binds man to God. He is the Mediator between God and man—necessarily the one Mediator of redemption, because the *One* Who alone is on an equality with both God and man. The separation between God and man, wrought by sin, is therefore bridged over by Jesus Christ; and the work of His Passion finished the work the Father had given the Son to do. The Cross was made the ladder of life, uniting earth with heaven. God stands above this cruciform ladder, and the angels ascend and descend upon it. But God does more than could be symbolised by Jacob's ladder of old, for God has by His humanity become Himself the *Way* to the Father. Hence God, Who once spoke from above the ladder to Jacob, now on this sixth day speaks from the Cross seven words to "Jacob's sons and daughters." In these words of the restoration of the fallen world and the opening of heaven to man by the Passion, we have words of equal power with the words of creation, and, moreover, a work of unparalleled mercy. "God spake

[1] Heb. i. 3.

once, and twice I have also heard the same; that power belongeth unto God; and that Thou, Lord, art merciful." He spake in creation, and He spake again in the restoration. He is "wise . . . and will not call back His words,"[1] for He has said that "as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall My word be that goeth forth out of My mouth: it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I send it."[2] It was so in creation, "He spake the word, and they were made; He commanded, and they were created."[3] His words became embodied in His works, and are thus ever praising His Almighty power and goodness.

It was so again in redemption; all the words of His Passion are words of power, but power manifesting its omnipotency in works of love and mercy. The words of the Creator called forth the natural life of the world, "He spake, and it was made." The words of the Redeemer are words that operate in the spiritual creation of His Church. Of Him it must be said, "Thou hast the words of eternal life";[4] and so it is that "all Thy works praise Thee, O Lord,"[5] but most of all Thy crowning work of mercy in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ.

[1] Isa. xxxi. 2. [2] Isa. lv. 10, 11. [3] Ps. cxlviii. 5.
[4] St. John vi. 68. [5] Ps. cxlv. 10.

We pass on for a moment to think of the time when all "our work" will be "finished," and when God will render to us according as our work shall be.

But in so far as it is *our* work it will not stand the Judge's scrutiny. Only the works in which we have co-operated with God—worked "together with Him,"[1] will be found in that day to stand the fire of His judgment. Our only hope is in God. If we are self-satisfied, we are already condemned, "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see."[2]

On the Cross the great work of our salvation has been negotiated. All grace, all merit, has been placed in the treasury of God for our use. Let us see that we claim it, that we value it, that we make good use of it. The talent laid up in a napkin is worse than useless—it is a voice crying out for vengeance.

At the moment of death we shall see spread out in the particular judgment all the work that we have made. Will the Judge declare that it is "very good"? We shall know that it cannot be altered then, that it is finished—but will it endure, or will it perish? Will

[1] 2 Cor. vi. 1. [2] Rev. iii. 17, 18.

it prove to be mere worthless wood, hay, stubble—food for the flames? or gold, silver, and precious stones, able to stand the purifying fires of the justice of God? "The fire," says St. Paul, "shall try every man's work of what sort it is."[1] If our work be to the praise and glory of God, it will be because we used our will to work in union with Jesus Christ. "It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do,"[2] and in His strength our weakness is made perfect.

The power of God is shown in the mercy of Jesus Christ. "His mercy is over all His works."[3]

To-day, the Good Friday of the restoration of man to fellowship with God, "the heavens and earth were finished." The heavens are opened; the earth is redeemed. The Church rises up out of the midst of the world, and is drawn up by the Cross as the *Scala cœli* to heaven. "When Thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death, Thou didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers." "God spake once, and twice I have also heard the same; that power belongeth unto God; and that Thou, Lord, art merciful."

Let our prayer be: "Have mercy upon me, O God, after Thy great goodness; according to the multitude of Thy mercies, do away mine offences"; and our praise: "O all ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord; praise Him, and magnify Him for ever."

[1] 1 Cor. iii. 13. [2] Phil. ii. 13. [3] Ps. cxlv. 9.

XXXIII.

HOLY WEEK

The Seven Words of Creation and Restoration

THE SEVENTH WORD

Prophecy

"God spake once, and twice I have also heard the same; that power belongeth unto God; and that Thou, Lord, art merciful."

Creation

"The seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God."

Restoration

"Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit."

XXXIII.

At Rest

I.

"AND on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made."[1]

"Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all that thou hast to do; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God . . . For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day, wherefore the Lord blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it."

The work of God in creation endured after all had been finished. It was ever before the eyes of men in the beauty and order of Nature. The rest of God must also be had in remembrance; it was therefore embodied and perpetuated in the Sabbath day—the day of rest.

[1] Gen. ii. 2, 3.

We must not, of course, connect the idea of fatigue and weariness with the work of God in creation. Weariness belongs to the body as we know it, not to God, Who "has neither body, parts, nor passions."[1] The Divine Nature is immutably restful. On the seventh day God ceased to create—that is what is meant by "God rested": "On the seventh day God ended His work which He had made." Indeed, He ended the work on the sixth day; but the seventh was the first day that saw no new work created or made. Hence it was a Sabbath—a rest.

The works of creation, as works of power, belong by attribution especially to the Father, just as we attribute to the Son works of mercy, and to the Holy Ghost works of grace.

"God spake once, and twice I have also heard the same; that power belongeth unto God, and that Thou, Lord, art merciful."

II.

The seventh day became, in the observance of the Jewish Sabbath, a type of the rest that remaineth for the people of God, after the work of life is over.

Day is followed by night; after work comes rest. Each day is, as it were, a short life succeeded by night and by sleep, the emblem of death. "Man goeth forth to his work, and to his labour, until the evening";[2]

[1] *Articles of Religion*, i. [2] Ps. civ. 23.

then he rests—and "the sleep of a labouring man is sweet."[1]

Our life is a longer or shorter period of nights and days, followed by the "night . . . when no man can work,"[2] and the long sleep of the body in death.

The rest at night is but a preparation for the day that follows. Even so the body sleeps in death that it may rise again when the eternal day shall dawn. When that long night brightens to the daybreak the spirit will return, and gently call the body back to itself. The body will rise again, not the "body of humiliation," the "natural body,"[3] worn, faded, diseased, that it parted from in death, but the spiritual, glorified body, made in the image and likeness of the Resurrection body of the Son of God, "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body."[4]

But between the death and resurrection of the body the spirit also rests, and yet is ceaselessly employed. Of the holy dead it is said, "They rest from their labours"; but we have no reason to suppose that this rest is not full of activity. They rest in so far as they have passed from the body in which they knew the sense of weariness, fatigue, pain, and strained endeavour. They have passed from the body in which they knew regret, anxiety, and sorrow; they are now indeed filled with a wonderful sense of rest, for all they now know, and see, and plan, brings with it nothing but an ever-

[1] Eccl. v. 12. [2] St. John ix. 4. [3] 1 Cor. xv. 44. [4] Phil. iii. 21.

growing sense of almost God-like power. No longer are they conscious of the vexation that comes from striving to do the will of God and the sense of continual failure; the struggle with temptations, and the haunting sense of sin; all this has gone for ever, and they do indeed rest from their labours. The soul now is flooded with a wonderful sense of freedom to give itself up absolutely to the will of God, so contrary to its weak endeavour, and still more feeble achievements when on earth. It knows God so much better than it knew Him here, for it has seen God in beholding the face of Jesus Christ.

"Now," says St. Paul, "we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then shall I know even as I am known."[1] The holy Souls go "from strength to strength";[2] they are purified ever more and more in the intermediate state. As the stains and rust of sin are cleansed in the Blood of Christ they draw nearer to the Beatific Vision; they see—afar off, perhaps—the open gates of the Paradise of God, and they press forward without a glance backward. They are drawn irresistibly towards God. In the Book of Wisdom we are told that "the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and there shall no torment touch them."[3] "No torment," because all servile fear is consumed in the flame of love. It does not say they do not suffer at all, only that "no torment can touch them." We know that,

[1] 1 Cor. xiii 12. [2] Ps. lxxxiv. 7. [3] Wisd. iii. 1.

in one sense, it is "a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."[1] We are told that "whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth."[2]

There may be, therefore, in the intermediate state a pain that is without torment, suffering that is full of joy. Even here on earth the Apostle Paul could say that he was "as sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing";[3] so that in the next world it may well be that the holy Souls, touched by the hand of the Lord, are perfected in joyful submission to His will. "Having been a little chastised, they shall be greatly rewarded: for God proved them, and found them worthy for Himself. As gold in the furnace hath He tried them, and received them as a burnt-offering."[4]

Think of what we may call the mental rest of the holy Souls. They know that for all eternity they are to be with God, and their will in perfect harmony with the will of God. They have seen Jesus Christ in the particular judgment, and He has welcomed them.

They know, too, that they cannot sin, and that every hour the rust of their old sins is being purged away. But yet more: as the stain is removed the image of God is restored, and all the grace and goodness of God is better seen and understood. The holy Souls begin to know God even as they are known of Him — perfectly. In these three certainties the joy of the intermediate state may perhaps consist.

[1] Heb. x. 31. [2] Heb. xii. 6. [3] 2 Cor. vi. 10. [4] Wisd. iii. 6.

But there is the other side. The stain of sin still holds the soul back from God. It longs for Him, but cannot endure itself in His Presence while it is imperfect. Thus the holy Souls suffer for a time what is called the pain of loss—*pœna damni.*

It may also be that the thought of the greater glory that the soul might have given to God had it been less unfaithful is in a measure a source of pain; but this we cannot tell, for the eye of the soul is not now turned inward, but ever it seeks the Face of God. Theologians have taught—but not the Church—that there is also in the intermediate state a pain of sense—*pœna sensus.* If the parable of Dives and Lazarus refers to the soul in the intermediate state before the Passion, it certainly supports this, but here again it is wiser not to dogmatise.

Very many times, in thinking of spiritual things and the unseen world, our curiosity is checked, and we are forced to live on in ignorance of much we would fain know. We do know, however, that no soul departing hence "in the Lord" can be cast for ever away from the Presence of God.[1] We know that few, if any, depart this life already perfect.[2] We know that no imperfect soul can enter heaven. We know that God, Who has begun the good work of sanctification, will perfect that work. Hence we conclude that this work of completion must be in an intermediate place or state, and we have the authority

[1] St. John vi. 37. [2] Phil. iii 12.

of God's Word and of His Church for our belief.[1] We know also that we can help the holy Souls by our prayers and other means.[2] But beyond this little is told to us. How the purification of the soul is accomplished, by what means, in how long or how short a time, we know nothing, or next to nothing. There is one beautiful promise in Holy Writ that refers to the hand of God in connection with the holy Souls. "God," writes St. John in his Apocalypse, "shall wipe away all tears from their eyes,"[3] a fulfilment surely of the words of Isaiah, "The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."[4]

The holy Souls are in the hand of God; they are in His safe keeping.

III.

"And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit; and having said thus, He gave up the ghost."[5]

Our Lord's first and last words from the Cross are spoken to His Father. We remember that His first words as a Child recorded in Holy Scripture were "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" and now, when He has finished the work His Father

[1] Phil. i. 6. [2] 2 Macc. xii. 44, 45; 2 Tim. i. 18.
[3] Rev. vii. 17. [4] Isa. xxxv. 10. [5] St. Luke xxiii. 46.

had given Him to do, He commends His spirit into His Father's hands.

We cannot read these words without a recollection of those already quoted, "The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God."

Our Lord had promised the penitent thief, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." The same place, or state, was therefore indicated by those two titles, "Thy hands" and "Paradise."

The Jews taught that there were three states beyond the grave: Heaven, the home of God; Abraham's bosom, which they also occasionally called Paradise, where the perfected souls of the righteous awaited the end of all things; and Gehenna, the place of torment, in which the lost remained for ever, and the imperfect were made perfect ere they passed into Abraham's bosom. Our Lord's words on the Cross referred to the second of these states—that in which the perfected spirits awaited His coming. Our Lord knew, what the Jews had forgotten, that no place or state is truly Paradise where there is not the manifested Presence of God. He therefore never spoke of Abraham's bosom as Paradise until the time came for that state to be enlightened by His entry in among the holy dead.

Where Christ is there is Paradise. At the Ascension our Lord entered heaven, so that now it is usually thought that there is no other Paradise than the heavenly one. Thither, as soon as they have been perfected in the intermediate state, pass the souls of

the faithful. They are no longer shut out of their Father's house, but by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ they enter into it as soon as they are fit.

> "Bright thy gates of pearl are shining,
> They are open evermore;
> And by virtue of His merits
> Thither faithful souls do soar,
> Who, for Christ's dear Name, in this world
> Pain and tribulation bore."

Our Lord's human Soul passed then from the Cross to the place where the holy dead awaited His coming as the Victor over death. He made the place of waiting a temporary Paradise by His Presence. The holy Body of the Saviour was also at rest. It was taken down from the Cross, wrapped in fine linen, pure and white, and laid in the tomb in the fragrant garden to await the dawn of Easter.

It is the eve of the great Sabbath, and all that has been done by the holy women in their last ministries of love to their Lord has been done quickly, for on the Sabbath none may work—it is the day of rest. The stone is rolled to the door of the sepulchre, the tomb is closed. Sadly the mourners go their way, and a great silence falls upon the place where the sacred Body is laid to rest.

The Paschal moon shines in the clear heavens; the stars come out one by one. The warm night breeze stirs the scent of the flowers; the stillness is unbroken, save for the clear note of a bird that now and again fills

the garden with its song and then is hushed, as though suddenly conscious of an unwonted presence.

The angels are gathering around the resting-place of their Lord, and as the first-born sons of God they offer for all creation their peaceful worship to Him "without Whom was not anything made that was made."

The work of restoration is finished: God rests.

XXXIV.

THE FEAST OF THE CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

The Palace for the Lord God

Prophecy

"The work is great; for the palace is not for man, but for the Lord God." (1 Chron. xxix. 1.)

Jesus Christ

"But I say unto you, That in this place is One greater than the Temple." (St. Matt. xii. 6.)

The Soul

"For Thy Temple's sake at Jerusalem: so shall kings bring presents unto Thee." (Ps. lxviii. 29.)

XXXIV.

The Palace for the Lord God

THE Church has for many centuries ordained that the Festival of the Conception of our Lady should be kept early in Advent.[1] The fitness of this arrangement is very evident, for even as Advent is the dawn that precedes the brightness of the coming of the Sun of Righteousness to illuminate a dark world, so the conception of Mary was the first token of the immediate drawing near of the Redeemer.

It may be well at once to recall the fact that, although the history of the Festival of Blessed Mary's Conception has from the first been connected in its observance with the idea of her freedom from the taint of original sin, yet the keeping of the Feast does not imply the acceptance of that theory as a doctrine. The Festival merely accentuates the joy of the Church in the fact that when the Blessed Virgin was conceived by her parents, the advent of the Messiah was near at hand.

[1] *i.e.* December 8th. The Oriental Menœnas and Kalendars have "The Conception of Anna" for the 9th December. Anne is the name in tradition of the mother of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

It is not anything in the Conception itself that the Feast commemorates, but that *she* was conceived who was destined to be "the woman," whose Seed should bruise the serpent's head. In the Church of Rome both the name of the Feast and its *raison d'être* have been altered in modern times.

The fierce controversy that raged for centuries on the supposed exemption of Mary from original sin ended (in 1854) in the new dogma of the *Immaculate* Conception being added to the faith of the Roman Church, and the addition of the word "Immaculate" to the old title of the Festival—"The Conception of Blessed Mary."

The Church of England retains the old title and the old idea. She commemorates the conception of our Lord's Mother without reference to any speculations as to whether or no that conception was "immaculate."[1]

There are in the Bible many types of "the woman" who is prophesied of in the first book of Holy Scripture as bearing "the Seed" that should crush the serpent, and who, in the last book of the inspired volume, is also revealed as the special mark of Satan's enmity.

The Temple of Solomon may be taken as typical of Blessed Mary, and as furnishing some thoughts that may be connected with the Feast of her Conception.

[1] The strongest arguments against the doctrine of the *Immaculate* Conception are those given by SS. Bernard and Thomas Aquinas, and by Cardinal John of Torquemada, A.D. 1431. The doctrine is not accepted in the Eastern Church.

Of all the works of Solomon none exercised greater influence upon the history of the people of Israel than the Temple. It was far more than an architectural display, or a centre of worship. It supplied the framework of the story of the kingdom of Judah. Like all great works it was the result of a long succession of events. The remote preparation for the building lay far, far back in the history of the chosen people. The years passed away, and still the ark of God dwelt in curtains, and had no permanent or worthy abiding place.

Then there came to David the strong desire to build a temple for the Lord, "an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob,"[1] but it was not permitted that he should do more than prepare for the work. We are especially told that the plan and design of the Temple were given by God Himself. "All this," said David, "the Lord made me understand in writing by His hand upon me, even all the work of this pattern," and he goes on to say, "Now I have prepared with all my might for the house of my God the gold for things to be made of gold, and the silver for things of silver, . . . onyx stones, and stones to be set, glistering stones, and of divers colours, and all manner of precious stones, and marble stones in abundance."[2]

Thus we learn that the work was "great," that no cost was spared, but that all which could make an earthly house meet for the house of God was lavished

[1] Ps. cxxxii. 5. [2] 1 Chron xxix 2.

upon it. And further, that the building might the more resemble a Divine creation, "there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building,"[1] but, "like some tall palm, the noiseless fabric sprang," till in Jerusalem were seen the courts of the Lord's house, rising terrace above terrace; till, high above the city within enclosures of pale red and yellow marble cloisters—cedar-roofed and richly gemmed—the Temple itself stood out, a mass of snowy marble and gold, glittering in the sunlight against the blue sky, and half encircling the Mount of Olives.

It seemed to be the crown of the city of God, and a vision of peace—"the joy of the whole earth,"[2] a very "house of gold," a "tower of ivory," all fair, as a bride adorned for her husband.

But for what purpose was the Temple built? Was it for its own sake, that it might stand there as a worthy object of the love and admiration of God's people, and be, for its own beauty, the glory and rejoicing of the nation?

Certainly not. The Temple was built and adorned, and became dear as the very apple of the eye to the true Israelite, just because the palace was "not for man, but for the Lord God." Whatever glory it possessed in itself—all its gold, its ivory, its precious stones, were as nothing compared with that mysterious Presence of God, which came to abide above the mercy-seat

[1] 1 Kings vi. 7. [2] Ps. xlviii. 2.

on the day of the solemn dedication of the Temple. It was then that "the glory of the Lord filled the house."[1]

II.

If the true sons of Israel longed for the building of the Temple, for the time when "the glory of the Lord" might be visibly enthroned in its midst, how much more earnestly did the sighs of God's ancient Church ascend to heaven that the days of the coming of the long-expected Messiah might be accomplished, and the promised "Seed of the woman" draw near to bruise the serpent's head. "O that Thou wouldest rend the heavens, that Thou wouldest come down!"[2]

And all the while, in the eternal counsel of God, the plan was present for the holy house in which it should please Him for a time to dwell.

"Wisdom hath builded her house"[3] to be "the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most Highest."[4] The work, too, is great, "for the palace is not for man, but for the Lord God." God looked, as it were, over all the whole earth, and from all the children of men He chose Mary to be the Mother of His beloved Son. He predestined her to this great glory, and ordained that she "should be holy and without blame before Him."[5] The Son of God might have accomplished our restoration in many ways, but He chose to take upon Him not only our nature, but to take it from Mary. Like

[1] 2 Chron. vii. 1. [2] Isa. lxiv. 1. [3] Prov. ix. 1.
[4] Ps. xlvi. 4. [5] Eph. i. 4.

the first Adam, He might have chosen to own no earthly parent, but He willed to be "made of a woman";[1] perhaps for this reason, that, as woman had worked the ruin of man, so should woman co-operate in the restoration. Here, then, we have the first mystery of Mary's glory springing from the impenetrable mystery of God's humiliation. He, Whose Name is above every name; Who is called "Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace,"[2] did not "abhor the Virgin's womb." At the first coming of sin into the world the Divine choice predestinated Mary to be "the woman" whose obedience should be set over against the disobedience of Eve, and of whom should be born the Second Adam; that "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."[3]

In the preparation for the Temple there were two stages. In the first, the rough stones were fashioned and made fit for their place; in the second, those stones were built up without further need of shaping.

Even so Mary was prepared, we may believe, for the great office to which God foreordained her. Apart from the question as to whether or no she was preserved from original sin, the great body of the faithful have always believed that no stain of actual sin ever defiled this holy Virgin. Like St. John Baptist, it has been thought that she was sanctified from her mother's womb.

[1] Gal. iv. 4. [2] Isa. ix. 6. [3] 1 Cor. xv. 22.

The Church of the early age had no dream of any Immaculate Conception except of Him Who was "conceived by the Holy Ghost"; but St. Augustine expresses the instinct of the Church in all ages when he says that, for the honour of our Lord, Mary must not be named when *actual* sin is spoken of.

God, Who chose Mary for the office of Θεότοκος, adorned her with all graces. He enriched her above all others with the gold of divine love, and the fulness of His choicest gifts. The angel sent from God proclaimed this when he saluted Mary as "highly graced," or "full of grace." She became the "house of gold"—the *domus aurea*—in a truer sense than the earthly Temple. Nor did this "fine gold" of Mary's union by charity with God ever become dim.

He Who said, "I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich,"[1] lavished all the riches of His grace on Mary—"the whole house He overlaid with gold."[2]

But our Lady is not only like the Temple in the golden splendour of her graces, she also resembles the "tower of David," built for an armoury, wherein there hang "a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men."[3] As a tower of defence our Lady has been built up of God to fortify and strengthen the doctrine of the Incarnation.

Thus, when Arianism attacked the Divinity of our Lord, the undivided Church in the great Council of

[1] Rev. iii. 18. [2] 1 Kings vi. 22. [3] Cant. iv. 4.

Ephesus proclaimed as part of the faith "once delivered unto the saints,"[1] that Mary was rightly called Θεότοκος —Dei Genitrix—Mother of God. If Jesus is God, and Mary the Mother of Jesus, Mary must be Mother of God—Mother, that is, of Him Who is God as well as man; not, of course, Mother of the Divine Nature, but of the "one Christ" Who is "perfect God, and perfect man."

Mary was there found to be a fortress like the "tower of David."

Thus, when we think upon Mary as figured by the palace which was "not for man, but for the Lord God," we contemplate a wonderful work of omnipotent power. Like the Temple of old, Mary towers aloft to heaven—she has no rival. The lonely heights of her holiness have never been climbed by man; only the angels of God hover around, softly repeating Gabriel's words, "Ave, gratia plena."

Another point of resemblance between the Temple of old and the Blessed Mother of God is this: her glory, her chief splendour, results less from her being the *domus aurea* (house of gold), or the *turris eburnea* (tower of ivory), than from her being "for the Lord God."

It was on the feast of the dedication that the Temple was "filled with the glory of the Lord," and it was surely the dedication of the mystical temple, when the Most High, that "dwelleth not in temples

[1] Jude 3.

made with hands,"[1] was incarnate of her to whom it was said by the Archangel, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that Holy Thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."[2]

"The rivers of the flood thereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most Highest. God is in the midst of her, therefore shall she not be removed."[3]

"Bright Queen of Heaven! God's Virgin Spouse!
The glad world's blessed Maid!
Whose beauty tyed life to thy house,
And brought us saving ayd.

"Thou art the true Love's-knot; by thee
God is made our allie;
And man's inferior essence He
With His did dignifie.

"For coalescent by that band,
We are His body grown;
Nourished with favours from His hand
Whom for our head we own.

"And such a Knot what arm dares loose?
What life, what death, can sever?
Which us in Him, and Him in us,
United keeps for ever.'

HENRY VAUGHAN, 1678.

[1] Acts vii. 48. [2] St. Luke i. 35. [3] Ps. xlvi. 4, 5.

XXXV.

THE FEAST OF THE PURIFICATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

Sorrow and Joy

Prophecy

"Heaviness may endure for a night; but joy cometh in the morning." (Ps. xxx 5.)

Jesus Christ

"Ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." (St. John xvi. 22.)

The Soul

"The Lord my God shall make my darkness to be light." (Ps. xviii. 28.)

XXXV

Sorrow and Joy

"As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing
As poor, yet making many rich;
As having nothing, and yet possessing all things."[1]
2 Cor. vi. 10.

JOY and sorrow are strangely blended in the Festival of the Purification of our Lady. It is kept towards the end of Christmastide, near to the beginning of Lent. It is the Purification of a stainless Virgin Mother, and the legal redemption by the Mother of that Son Who has already been given to her as her own Saviour—her Redeemer; it is at once a joyful and a sorrowful mystery; joyful, because He, the Redeemer, so long expected, has now come to His Temple; sorrowful, because it is there revealed that He is set for the fall as well as the rising again of many in Israel, and because of the grief that must needs pierce the Mother's heart in the Passion of her Son. In this way the Feast is one of the joyful mysteries in the life of Jesus Christ, and one of the seven sorrows of the life of Mary. It is, moreover, at one and the same time

[1] This text may be called a "Brief life of Mary."

the requiem of the old national Jewish Church of God, and the promise of its expansion into the Church of all peoples and kindreds and tongues. The representative of the past dispensation departs "in peace," because his eyes have seen the salvation which is to be "a light to lighten the Gentiles," as well as "the glory" of Israel.

This mingling of joy and sorrow in the Feast of "the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, commonly called the Purification of St. Mary the Virgin,"[1] was formerly symbolised in the Church ceremonial observed on this day. The joy was figured by the white vestments worn at the Eucharist, and by the lighted tapers that were carried by clergy and people in the solemn procession.

St. Bernard writes: "We go in procession two and two, carrying lights in our hands, lighted not at common fire, but at fire that has been blessed. They that go forth first return last, and in the way we sing, 'Great is the glory of God.' We go two and two in commendation of charity and social life, for even so did Christ send forth His Apostles. We go bearing lights to signify, first, that our light should shine before men; and secondly, because the wise virgins, of whom Mary is the chief, went to meet their Lord with lamps lit and burning." From this usage the Feast is called "Candelaria," or Candlemas. St. Bernard draws out further lessons. Those who go out first and return

[1] Title in Book of Common Prayer.

last, are reminded of the words of the Lord, "Many that are first shall be last," and thus they are urged to examine their life and conversation, so that they may, judging themselves, not be condemned at the last. The procession—or going forward—is in itself a memento of the law of spiritual life—progress; "They shall go from strength to strength." There is no standing still in the heavenward road. But in the procession the vestments are violet, as though to bring forcibly before the mind the fact that here we are strangers and pilgrims seeking a rest; we go forward to the city "which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Robed in the violet of penance, the Church is enabled to press forward, the light of faith making her "joyful through hope."

I.

"As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."[1] These words were written by St. Paul as descriptive of the apostolic life to which he and others had been called, and in a measure true of the life of every Christian. They may very appropriately be applied to the life of Mary and the Feast of the Purification: "As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing."

"The law of the Incarnation is a law of suffering. Our Blessed Lord was the Man of Sorrows, and by

[1] 2 Cor. vi. 10.

suffering He redeemed the world. His Passion was not a mystery detached from the rest of His life, but only the fitting and congruous end of it. Calvary was not unlike Bethlehem and Nazareth. It exceeded them in degree, it did not differ from them in kind. The whole of the three-and-thirty years was spent in consistent suffering, though it was of various kinds, and not of uniform intensity. The same law of suffering, which belongs to Jesus, touches all who come nigh Him, and, in proportion to their holiness, envelops them, and claims them wholly for itself."[1] No sooner is He born than the Holy Innocents die in His stead. Then follows the long procession of the martyrs, headed by St. Stephen. The Apostles one by one pass through the sea of their own blood to their reward; all are martyrs except St. John, who miraculously escapes the boiling oil, to linger on and die at Ephesus—the Apostle of the love of God. The Confessors and the Virgins all suffer for Him.

Is it then strange that this law should fall most of all on her who is nearest to Him—His Mother?

"It can plainly be no wonder if she shall suffer more than anyone but Himself. The immensity of her sorrows will neither be a distress nor a surprise to us, but rather the obvious conclusion from all we know of the grand mystery of the Incarnation. The amount of her sufferings will be the index of the magnificence of His love for her. The depth of her

[1] Fr. Faber, *The Foot of the Cross*, p. 3.

pains will come the nearest of all things to fathom the abyss of her love to Him. Her far-rolling sea of sorrow will measure the grandeur of her holiness. . . . The Woman clothed with the Sun will be wrapped round and round with the bright darkness of that same terrible destiny which He vouchsafed first to appoint and then accept as the great law of His Incarnation."[1]

Mary's sorrows are usually implied rather than particularised in the Gospels. The doubt of St. Joseph, the strange ways of God in bringing about the Incarnation, the nearness and yet the distance between her Son and herself, the early intuition that He was destined as the Messiah to an awful Passion, must have filled the heart of Mary with a strange haunting sense of impending doom. The words of Simeon must have fallen like a voice from heaven confirming all her fears, "Behold, this Child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel."

That Jesus was for the "rising again" of the dead and dying would seem quite fitting, but that His coming should be also for "the fall" of many in Israel was a new grief to the sinless heart of Mary. She had henceforth to see in her Child the Judge as well as the Saviour; a "rock of offence, a stone of stumbling," as well as the "way" to the Father. The presence of Jesus must have brought to Mary at once the joy of the vision of God and the grief which was beyond all other

[1] Fr. Faber, *The Foot of the Cross*, p. 5.

sorrows. The law of nearness to Himself made Mary necessarily the chief of martyrs. And yet Mary is never gloomy, never depressed. Her secret is to be "as sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing." And so, as soon as the great message of the Incarnation had come from God, and all the perplexities of its meaning were opening before her, Mary arises "with haste," and goes into the hill-country to visit her cousin Elizabeth. There it is that she sings her *Magnificat*, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath *rejoiced* in God my Saviour."

And now the *joy* of the Presentation is hers. It is her Son Whom Simeon welcomes, and at Whose coming he sings, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word. For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation." For her Son that Temple was built, and has been waiting, so that there may be a fulfilment of the prophet's words, "The Lord, Whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His Temple."[1] It was this simple splendour of His coming that was to dim the lustre of all the magnificence of the Temple of Solomon. It was this Presentation that fulfilled the prophecy, "The glory of this latter house shall be greater than that of the former."[2]

Many offerings had been presented to God in the Temple, but never before had God Himself come down and handed Himself over to one of His creatures in order Himself to be there offered. Never before had

[1] Mal. iii. 1. [2] Hag. ii. 9.

the Eternal Father seen an oblation within those walls of which He could say, "This is My beloved Son."

But it is Mary who has brought this offering to God. He is her Son also, of Whom God the Father speaks those words, "This is *My* beloved Son." Oh, strange and awful mystery! the Son of God is the Son of Mary; the creature offers the Creator, "without Whom was not anything made that was made"; and the Creator calls one of His creatures by the name of "Mother."

The light of joy illuminates the shadows of Mary's grief; it breaks forth as the sun from a dark cloud, and fills the Temple and the whole Church with radiance. The lights and shadows of life are made harmonious in the presence of the Incarnate Word. And so onwards, throughout her life; little is recorded of Mary, but in that little there is always the purple thread of sorrow intertwined with the gold of joy.

She has the joy of saving the young Child's life, and flying with Him into Egypt; but the sword pierces her Mother's heart as the voice of Rachel weeping for her children haunts her throughout the journey. She can feel with the mother in every age weeping for the death of her child.

> "Voices of Rachel weeping for her children
> Plead through the ages, how she prays with anguish;
> Thou, through whose soul the sword of grief hath stricken,
> Travailest with her."

And the spiritual Mother also—the Church of God

—finds Mary to be *Consolatrix afflictorum*—a consoler of the sorrowful. This is a joy to Mary, though one necessarily linked with the sorrow of the world. She seeks her lost Boy "sorrowing," but how glad is the finding in the Temple and the journey to Nazareth! Throughout the eighteen hidden years of holy toil when, as a Carpenter, the Son of Mary laboured with His hands in the village workshop, there must have been great peace and immense joy in Mary's heart, abiding side by side with dark shadows from the future Cross.

And then came the time when the ministry of Jesus must begin. At Cana of Galilee that active life opens at a simple wedding feast. The wine fails, and the Mother mentions the fact to her Son. His hour, He says, is not yet come, but He waives that, and works His first miracle at His Mother's implied prayer. It is ever to be so. His Mother, as such, has no claim on His Divine power; she has, however, the claim which He will allow to all—the claim of faith. Later on He was Himself to teach that whatsoever was asked in His Name—in faith—should be granted. He will not the less grant to faith what is asked, because the petitioner can call Him "Son."

If to all who ask shall be given, not the less but rather the more shall be granted to the Mother He loves beyond all others on earth. What a joy is this first miracle to Mary! And yet it marks the time when He must be hers no longer, as He has been in the past; He has other work to do—work that will take Him from

her side. The joy of Cana is mingled with sorrow. And so Mary goes home from the wedding feast, "as sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing." Rejoicing, because He is doing the work He came to do; sorrowful, because she knows something of what it will cost Him to do it. She must see less of the Face of God, in order that the Beatific Vision may be eternally hers and ours.

II.

"As poor, yet making many rich."

"As poor," she appeared at Bethlehem not long since, when, for herself and her Son, there was "no room" in the inn. And yet the heavens were awake with the praise of the inestimable Gift of God that was offered to the world through Mary. "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will." It is the Son of Mary Who comes into the Gospel story "as poor," Who hereafter says to the angel of the Church in Laodicea, "I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich."[1]

All to whom Jesus Christ has given "the exceeding riches of His grace,[2] and for whom He is preparing the "riches of His glory,"[3] must remember that Mary is the channel through which this Gift has come from heaven. He "was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made Man."

Again on this Feast of her Purification Mary comes to the Temple "as poor." St. Luke tells us she came

[1] Rev. iii. 18. [2] Eph. ii. 7. [3] Rom. ix. 23.

"to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons."[1] This offering was distinctly the alternative sacrifice for the poor who were not able to bring a lamb. But, in the Presentation of her Son, Mary offered the "Lamb of God, Who taketh away the sins of the world." She offered the reality instead of the figure; she offered that which gave to Simeon what none of the costly offerings received in the Temple had given—she presented the salvation of the world. Thus enriched he could sing his *Nunc Dimittis* at the coming in of the great High Priest, Who should abide for ever.

The prophetess Anna is also filled with thanksgiving for this coming of the Lord to His Temple.

The holy Mother came "as poor," but in her hands she brought the ransom of a world—"as poor, yet making many rich."

When the wise men sought for the King of kings, they found "the young Child with Mary His Mother." All their gifts, their gold, incense, and myrrh, were nothing compared with the gift they received, "The light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."[2]

So again at Cana, and beneath the Cross; so too in the upper room at Jerusalem, waiting for the coming of the Divine Spirit, and in the house of the Apostle at Ephesus waiting for the end—it is always the same,

[1] St. Luke ii. 24. [2] 2 Cor. iv. 6.

"as poor, yet making many rich." Poor in herself, rich in her God—poor in her own power, but mighty in her witness for Jesus Christ; ever "the handmaid of the Lord," whose "lowliness" has been looked upon by the Most High, but ever also the one for whom "He that is mighty hath done great things," the one whom He has "exalted," and whom all generations shall call "blessed."

The great desire of the heart of Mary has been to make known the riches of her Son Jesus Christ, and to bring Him to the world. She could say with St. Paul, "I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift."[1] I long to see you possessed of Jesus Christ my Son.

The Apostle was poor, and yet the "gift of God" which was in his keeping enabled him to make many rich—to give a peace and contentment which all the wealth of the world had failed to bestow.

St. Paul passes on to the last seeming paradox, and declares himself to be "as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

Turning back in thought once again to Mary at her Purification, we find these words when applied to her are most true. In earthly treasure she was poor, but in her Son she possessed all the riches of God. Her joy in offering her Son in His earthly temple was mingled with sorrow. Thinking of her as she now is in heaven, there is a change. The purple of the Candlemas

[1] Rom. i. 11.

procession is needed no more, for the journeying is done. She who went on her way weeping is now at rest in the courts of the Lord's house. The white garments of the Eucharist remain, for God has taken away the sorrow, and it is all gladness now. Mary, who once went her way "as sorrowful"—sowing in tears—now reaps in joy.

Mary, who formerly was known "as poor," is now the "Queen in a vesture of gold," standing at the right hand of the King.

Mary, who was thought of "as having nothing," now is seen and known as "possessing all things."

XXXVI.

THE FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

Speculum Beatæ Virginis

Prophecy

"Thou art the exaltation of Jerusalem, thou art the great glory of Israel, thou art the great rejoicing of our nation." (Judith xv. 9.)

Jesus Christ

"Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee." (Song of Solomon iv. 7.)

The Soul

"Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?" (Song of Solomon vi. 10.)

XXXVI.

Speculum Beatæ Virginis[1]

THE following quotation forms the second and third sections of a long discourse by Dr. Hickes (1686) on the "due praise and honour of the Virgin Mary."

Dr. Hickes was a celebrated non-juring bishop. He was born in 1642, and ordained in 1666. After holding several ecclesiastical preferments he was, in 1681, made chaplain in ordinary to King Charles II., and Dean of Worcester in 1683.

In 1694 Dr. Hickes was consecrated suffragan bishop of Thetford. He died on December 15, 1715. He was a man of universal learning, deeply read in the writings of the Fathers.

The first and fourth sections of the sermon are not given here. The first section is concerned with the proof that the words of the text (St. Luke i. 28) "might have been used by the angel in saluting any other righteous and holy person." This occupies four pages.

The fourth section is a criticism of a long series of quotations from Roman Catholic books of piety, chiefly

[1] The title of Dr. Hickes' sermon, *i.e.*, "Mirror of the Blessed Virgin."

addresses and prayers to the Blessed Virgin. This section occupies thirty-two pages.

I.

"'*And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women.*' (St. Luke i. 28.)

"The words of my text are the salutation of the angel Gabriel unto the Virgin Mary, when he came to tell her that God had chosen her to be the Mother of the Messias. . . .

"Having now showed[1] that there is nothing so peculiar in the angel's salutation, but that he might have said the like to any other righteous person, I proceed to show that the blessed Virgin whom he saluted in the foregoing words was a very holy person, as may be shown first in general, and secondly in particular, from the history of the Annunciation as it is set forth in this chapter.

"1. First, then, it may be showed in general that she was a very holy person, from the word κεχαριτωμένη, whether it be rendered, 'Thou that art highly favoured,' or 'Thou that art full of grace.' It is not to be imagined that an angel should be sent from God to give such a title to any man or woman, but who was a saint of the first rank. But it is much more evident that she was such an one from the matter of his message, or annunciation, which was to tell her that

[1] In the first portion of the sermon.

she should conceive and bring forth Jesus the Saviour of the world, and that the Holy Ghost to that end should come upon her, and the power of the Highest overshadow her, and that the Holy Child which should be born of her should be the Son of God. Certainly the Holy Ghost would come upon none but a pure saint; He that affects the symbols of innocence and purity in all His appearances, and cannot enter into a malicious soul, nor dwell in the body that is subject unto sin, would not have come in that manner, and for that mighty purpose, upon any daughter of Adam, but one who had been cleansed from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and perfected in the fear of God. Nay, God the Father, Who was to prepare a body for His eternal Son, as it is written, 'A body hast Thou prepared me,' would not form it of the substance of a sinful woman, but His own essential holiness, as well as the mysterious decency of the dispensation, would prompt Him to form it of the substance of one that, like the king's daughter in the Psalm, was all glorious within, and a pure and spotless virgin, both in body and mind. We may be also assured from the holiness of God the Son, the Eternal Word of the Father, that He would not take upon Him the seed of Abraham, but of one of the genuine daughters of Abraham; nor deign to be conceived in the womb of any woman, but of such an one, who was a vessel of honour, in whom the Spirit of God did dwell, and whose very body was the temple of the Holy Ghost.

She that was the Mother of God could not but be a very good woman; she that conceived and bare, and brought forth the Holy Child Jesus, the Virgin Mother of Immanuel, of whom the Prophet wrote as he was inspired, surely must have been pure as He was pure, and holy as He was holy.

"For to use the Apostle's phrase in another sense, the fulness of the Godhead could not dwell bodily in a wicked woman, nor could she be deceived and led away by the Serpent whose seed was to bruise the Serpent's head.

"Nay, to be chosen for the Mother of God was the greatest honour and favour that ever God conferred upon any human creature. None of the special honours and favours that He did to any of the saints before or since are equivalent to the honour of being the Mother of God. And therefore we may be sure that God, Who said, 'Them that honour Me I will honour,' would not have done so great an honour to any daughter of Abraham, but to one who best deserved it, to one of the holiest among the daughters of Israel, to the most heavenly-minded virgin of the tribe of Judah and the royal house of David, who had no superior for holiness upon earth.

"If we had no particular account of her graces we might rationally conclude all this of her from the history of our Lord's Incarnation, for nothing less than superlative holiness could receive such a testimony of divine honour from the Holy Trinity. She was, as

it were, the spouse of God, co-parent with Him of the wonderful Immanuel, Who was God and Man—God of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds, and Man of the substance of His holy Mother, born in the world; perfect God and perfect Man, and yet not two, but one Christ.

"2. But then, in the second place, we have a particular account of many of those eminent graces which adorned her in the Annunciation of the Angel, as it is related by St. Luke. As of first her chastity—she was 'a virgin,' (*v.* 27), one that 'knew not a man' (*v.* 34).

"Such a pure virgin as was foretold by the prophet, who said, 'a virgin shall conceive a son'[1] a virgin in mind as well as body, ... an entire virgin, who was all purity within as well as without, ... keeping her body as the sanctuary, or holy place, and her soul as the holiest of holies, and herself fit both in body and soul to be the habitation of the Holy Ghost and a tabernacle for the Son of God. Secondly, we have an account of her great modesty and humility, which put her into great disorder at the salutation of the angel: 'When she saw him, she was troubled at his saying,' and wondered what the meaning of his salutation should be. She had nothing of the Pharisee in her, as, doubtless, many other virgins had, who would upon such an address have presently concluded in favour of their holiness, that it was so great and eminent above the holiness of other virgins, that

[1] Isa. vii. 14.

they deserved that peculiar honour of God. But she, on the contrary, was so very humble that she was all blush without and confusion within at the appearance and compliment of the angel.[1] She wondered what should move God to send one of the seven spirits that attend upon His throne to visit her; she wondered what should incline Him to honour her so much, and why the angel should speak unto her as unto a holy person, and the favourite of heaven. She had a greater sense of her human imperfections and infirmities than of her virtues;[2] and in so mean and humble an opinion of herself could not imagine why she should be blessed and praised above those of her own sex.

"So also in her *Magnificat*, which she delivered upon the salutation of her cousin Elizabeth, she admires and adores the infinite condescension of God to her low estate. And truly, the signal honour which God did her, in choosing her for the Mother of His Son, is an argument according to the Scriptures, that she was lowly in mind as well as low in fortune. For 'God resisteth the proud, but He giveth grace' (which is a Hebrew phrase for showing favour) 'unto the lowly,' saith Solomon.[3] And saith the Prophet Isaiah, 'Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, Whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy

[1] "She was troubled at his saying." (St. Luke i. 29.)

[2] This does not, of course, mean actual sins, but the essential imperfection of the human nature compared with the Divine; Mary's great humility made her little in her own eyes.

[3] Prov. iii. 34.

place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.'[1] And this being the usual method of God's proceeding with the sons of men, we may conclude that the Virgin Mary was a very meek and humble maid, because God exalted her above her fellows.

"The third eminent grace, which we find in the blessed Virgin, was her faith, which was every way as great as that of the Father of the Faithful, who 'being not weak in faith,' saith the Apostle, 'considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: but against hope, believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, not staggering at the promise of God, Who can quicken the dead, and call those things which be not as though they were.'[2]

"In like manner the blessed Virgin, after the angel had told her that 'the power of the Highest should come upon her,' 'staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, being fully persuaded that what He had promised, He was able to perform.' She knew that He Who formed Adam of the ground, and Eve of one of the ribs of Adam, was also able to form the body of His Son of her substance; and therefore, though she knew not a man, she said unto the angel, 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy word.' She

[1] Isa. lvii. 15. [2] Rom. iv. 17, etc.

knew it was most reasonable to rely on the word of Omnipotence, and essential truth, and in this she is commended above Zacharias, who did not believe the message of the angel when he told him that his wife Elizabeth should bear him a son. He objected that he was an old man, and his wife well stricken in years, forgetting that Sarah herself received strength to conceive Isaac when she was past age; and therefore the Lord struck him with dumbness, because he believed not His words.

"But though we read of no other graces in her, yet we may be sure she had all the rest that could render her righteous and acceptable in the sight of God. There must needs have been a noble structure erected upon such a foundation of humility, purity, and faith; when these led up the dance we may be sure the whole choir of moral virtues followed after. And therefore in the third place:

"3. It is our duty, who have the benefit of her example, to honour and celebrate her name, and commemorate her virtues, and set forth her praises, in whom there was a concurrence of so many divine virtues, such a strong faith, such abasing humility, such pure chastity, and all other graces in as much perfection as was consistent with human frailty.

"So divine, so righteous a person ought to be had in everlasting remembrance, and blessed among women from generation to generation. We ought not to mention her name without honour—her name, which

ought to be like precious ointment, wheresoever the Gospel is preached, and written in the biggest and most conspicuous character in the diptychs of the Church. If the names of other saints are distinguished with miniature, hers ought to shine with gold. Especially if we consider that she, of all the virgin daughters of Israel, had the honour to be chosen by the Holy Trinity for the Mother of God. What shall be done to the woman whom the King of kings delighteth to honour? Certainly, if we should hold our peace, and refuse to praise her among women, the stones of the Church would cry out, 'The stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it.' If what the woman did, who poured forth a box of precious ointment upon the head of our Saviour, was to be spoken of for a memorial of her wheresoever the Gospel should be preached throughout the whole world, surely that most blessed Virgin, who had the honour to bring forth and breed up the Son of God, ought to have a festival and be mentioned with all due reverence and esteem in all the Churches of the saints. Wheresoever the Gospel is preached, that which she hath done and suffered for our Lord ought to be spoken of for a memorial of her, from whom He took that very body, which was crucified, and that precious blood, which was shed for the remission of our sins.

"4. But then, in the fourth place, though we ought to honour her, and have honourable thoughts and make honourable mention of her, yet we ought to take care

that we do not honour her too much, in thinking and speaking more highly of her than we ought to think and speak of a human creature. Indeed, there is a particular respect due unto her upon the account of her eminent graces, and as she is the Mother of God. And so we find her cousin Elizabeth treated her with a particular respect under that character, "Whence is this to me, that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?' But then we must not let our respect for her commence into worship, nor romance her into a deity, because it was her lot to be that happy Virgin of whom Christ was born. We must not treat her upon the account of her singular relation to Immanuel, as if she were an infinite majesty, or as if her graces were indeed divine attributes, 'and her prerogatives of grace and glory,' as a late book asserts, 'one and the same with those of her Son.' We ought not to pay such homage and veneration to her under the character of the Queen as is only due to the King of Heaven, but we must carefully keep our respects to her person and memory within due bounds and limits.

II.

"Wherefore, my brethren of this truly Catholic and Apostolic Church of England, let us take care to keep within the bounds and limits which our pure and holy Mother, after the example of the primitive Church, hath set to the praise and honour of the blessed Virgin. Let

[1] Epist. Dedicat. to the *Contemplations of the Virgin Mary.*

us cheerfully and respectfully give her the honourable titles of holy, and blessed, and perpetual Virgin; and call her without scruple 'the Holy and Blessed Mother of God': nay, let us for peace-sake go as far as we can with our fellow Christians of the Latin Communion, so we go with caution and circumspection, in honouring of this Glorious Saint. Let us acknowledge with them that she is to be honoured above all Saints. . . . Let us acknowledge with them her perpetual Virginity, according to ancient tradition; and if it will gain or oblige any of them, let us not oppose them in the opinion they have, that she promised and vowed her virginity to God; for it is an innocent opinion, though it is precarious, and hath no ground in Scripture or primitive antiquity. . . . Let us give her all the honour that is due to so great a Saint, but not one jot more than is allowed to a Creature; and if by doing so much, and no more, you offend on the left hand and on the right, the offence will be taken, and not given; but if by refusing to do so much you offend, the offence will be given to both Churches, and that will be a great offence.

"To conclude, let us always mention her with respect; let her name still perfume the air like precious ointment; let us celebrate her great virtues; let us keep her Festivals, as it becomes true sons of the primitive Church of England; let us imitate her blessed example, and thank God for the benefit of it; let us endeavour, as she did, to hear the word of God, and keep it, and to

do the will of our heavenly Father, and then we shall all become (κεχαριτωμένοι) high favourites of Heaven, even the mother, and sister, and brethren of Christ; to Whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed by the universal Church, all Worship, Adoration, Majesty, and Dominion, both now and evermore. Amen."

Mother out of Sight.[1]

SAW ye the bright-eyed, stately child,
With sunny locks so soft and wild,
How in a moment round the room
His keen eye glanced, then into gloom
Retired, as they who suffer wrong
When most assured they look and long?
Heard ye the quick appeal, half in dim fear,
In anger half, "My Mother is not here"?

Perchance some burthen'd heart was nigh,
To echo back that yearning cry
In deeper chords than may be known
To the dull outward ear alone.
What if our English air be stirred
With sighs from saintly bosoms heard,
Or penitents, to leaning angels dear,
"Our own, our only Mother is not here."

* * * * *

Mother of God! O, not in vain
We learn'd of old thy lowly strain.
Fain in thy shadow would we rest,
And kneel with thee, and call thee blest;
With thee would "magnify the Lord,"
And if thou art not here adored,
Yet seek we, day by day, the love and fear
Which bring thee, with all saints, near and more near.

[1] This poem by John Keble was written for his *Lyra Innocentium*, but withheld from publication at the time. Three verses are here omitted.

What glory thou above hast won,
By special grace of thy dear Son,
We see not yet, nor dare espy
Thy crowned form with open eye.
Rather beside the manger meek,
Thee bending with veiled brow we seek,
Or where the angel in the thrice-great Name
Hail'd thee, and Jesus to thy bosom came.

Yearly since then with bitterer cry
Man hath assail'd the Throne on high,
And sin and hate more fiercely striven
To mar the league 'twixt earth and heaven.
But the dread tie, that pardoning hour,
Made fast in Mary's awful bower,
Hath mightier proved to bind than we to break.
None may that work undo, that Flesh unmake.

Thenceforth, Whom thousand worlds adore,
He calls thee Mother evermore;
Angel nor Saint His face may see
Apart from what He took of thee.
How may we choose but name thy name,
Echoing below their high acclaim
In holy Creeds? Since earthly song and prayer
Must keep faint time to the dread anthem there.

How, but in love on thine own days,
Thou blissful one, upon thee gaze?
Nay every day, each suppliant hour,
Whene'er we kneel in aisle or bower,
Thy glories we may greet unblamed,
Nor shun the lay by seraphs framed,
"Hail, Mary, full of grace!" O, welcome sweet
Which daily in all lands all saints repeat!

Fair greeting, with our matin vows
Paid duly to the enthroned Spouse;
His Church and Bride, here and on high,
Figured in her deep purity,
Who, born of Eve, high mercy won,
To bear and nurse the Eternal Son.
O, awful station, to no seraph given,
On this side touching sin, on the other heaven!

Therefore as kneeling day by day,
We to our Father duteous pray,
So unforbidden may we speak
An Ave to Christ's Mother meek:
(As children with "good morrow" come
To elders in some happy home:)
Inviting so the saintly host above
With our unworthiness to pray in love.

To pray with us, and gently bear
Our falterings in the pure bright air.
But strive we pure and bright to be
In spirit, else how vain of thee
Our earnest dreamings, awful Bride!
Feel we the sword that pierced thy side.
Thy spotless lily flower, so clear of hue,
Shrinks from the breath impure, the tongue untrue.

Dec. 8, *in Conceptione B. V. M.*, 1844.

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